

**COACHING GUIDE FOR TEE-BALL &
A BASEBALL/SOFTBALL (COACH-PITCH)**

**YOUR TEAM**

* A “Team Roster” email was sent out to everyone in mid-March via SportsConnect after the teams were formed. That email has the contact emails for all your team families. You should use group emails to communicate with your team. Our AA and older teams do use the GameChanger app to track practices and games and to support messaging with families, but we try to keep things simpler for our younger divisions. This means we create a one-page, combined schedule that includes the practice and game schedules for all of our Tee-Ball and Coach-Pitch teams.
* Initial Team Meeting – At the start of your first practice, hold a team meeting to introduce yourself, ask for help from team parents, ask players to introduce themselves (name, favorite dessert or animal, etc.), explain bat safety, address bathroom usage, have the kids suggest and vote on a team name, etc. Most parents will be present during practices and games, so ask them to help run a practice station, coach a base, help on the field during games, run the dugout, or whatever you need. Kids this age like to have post-game snacks. Ask a parent to create a snack schedule for the Saturday games.
* Be encouraging—most players at this level will struggle with some aspects of hitting, throwing, and catching. This is especially true early in the season and is completely normal!

**LEAGUE EVENTS**

* There are various NW Seattle Little League (NWSLL) events to be aware of:
	+ First Saturday in May – Team Picture Day & Fan Fest Fundraiser at Soundview Playfields
		- Teams will be provided in late April with a schedule and directions for the taking of team and individual pictures.
		- NWSLL typically provides a food truck and a hitting game for prizes at Soundview as part of the Fan Fest Fundraiser (due to Covid, the extent of our plans for 2022 are not yet set).
	+ First Saturday in June – NWSLL Championship Day & League Picnic (due to Covid, the 2022 plans for the League Picnic are not yet set)
		- NWSLL holds the championship games for its Kid-Pitch divisions of AA thru Majors Baseball on Soundview Fields 3 and 4.
		- Food trucks and activities are provided.
		- Around midday, there is a leaguewide team parade and the awarding of team Sportsmanship Awards.

**CROWN HILL FIELD AND SOUNDVIEW 2 FIELD**

While the vast majority of practice and game events will be at Crown Hill Field (off Holman Road across from Dick’s Drive In), some overflow Tee-Ball games on Saturdays will be held at the Soundview 2 Field (60’ field on Lower Soundview area SW of Whitman Middle School) because there are too many teams to fit them all in at Crown Hill. Here is some helpful information related to our fields:

* Home team takes the 3rd-base dugout; away team takes the 1st-base dugout
* The teams playing the first game of the day at each field are responsible for preparing the field. This means chalking the baselines, installing bases, and raking out any damp spots/applying field dry mix. Crown Hill has 45’ bases installed on buried base posts. Soundview 2 will use throwdown bases at 45’ (the field’s base posts are at 60’, which is used for AA and up divisions. First game at Crown Hill starts at 9:00, so plan to arrive by 8:30 for prep. First game at Soundview 2 starts at 1:30, so play to arrive by 1:00 for prep.
* Each field has a Seattle Parks jobox which contains field prep materials and some equipment provided by NWSLL. The code for every Seattle Parks lockbox (holding a key for the jobox locks) is 2396.
* Seattle Parks often does not maintain Soundview 2 very well, and the field has issues with wet conditions due to poor drainage. We regularly ask Seattle Parks to address playability issues on Soundview 2, but please be understanding that they allocate limited resources to maintain it. Due to field capacity constraints, however, we do need to use it. Crown Hill, on the other hand, drains very well and is often very playable even when there has been rain.
* There is a Seattle Parks “Field Rainout Notification” service that you can subscribe to here: <https://www.seattle.gov/parks/reserve/sports-fields>. The system will email you each day with fields that are officially “rained out” per Seattle Parks. This system only operates Monday through Friday. We suggest that each of you sign up for these notifications. That said, we encourage you to check the field in person before actually canceling a practice as Seattle Parks is often conservative, and Crown Hill drains very well.
* On Saturday game days we recommend you all communicate with each other about field playability. The coaches for the first games at each field should collectively inspect the field and make a decision about whether the field is playable. Check it out enough in advance to allow for communications with families. Often, with just 15-20 minutes of raking/applying of field dry, you can make a slightly wet Crown Hill Field playable. If there are just a couple of trouble spots, the field is easy to prep. If the whole infield is shiny and slippery, games should be canceled. Rained out games will be canceled instead of rescheduled.
* Games are often played in typical Seattle Spring rain showers. But if the rain is harder, or if there is lightning/thunder, games should be canceled or delayed as appropriate. Use your best collective judgment.
* NWSLL provides a Honey Bucket bathroom at Crown Hill. Please make sure it is locked back up after your practices and games. We will separately provide you with the combination for the bathroom lock. At Soundview 2 you will use the bathroom facility provided by Seattle Parks.

**SAFETY**

At this level of play, ensuring safety is our primary responsibility. Here are the main safety rules that you should observe during the season:

1. Unless actively batting in a game or practice, bats should be held by the barrel. This discourages players carelessly swinging the bat while not paying attention to others.
2. Players need to wear helmets when they are holding a bat or running the bases.
3. There is no on-deck circle; batters remain in the dugout (bats down) until they are up to bat.
4. Coaches cannot leave the game or practice field until all of their players have been safely handed off to a parent or guardian.
5. Players who need to use the restroom during a game or practice should be accompanied by a parent or trusted adult.

**TEAM GEAR/EQUIPMENT**

* Items issued directly to team coaches:
	+ Team duffel bag with team bats, helmets, and a mesh bag with some balls
	+ Set of jerseys in various sizes. These jerseys are for the players to keep. The league can usually provide additional jerseys in other sizes for Coach-Pitch teams (by using overstock from other divisions). The Tee-Ball teams are issued all jerseys that are in stock. Before the end of the season, return any unused jerseys to NWSLL for use in future seasons.
	+ Set of NW hats in various sizes for both players and coaches. The league can provide additional hats in other sizes as needed. As with the jerseys, please return unused hats to NWSLL.
* Items stored in the Crown Hill jobox or on the field:
	+ 4 batting tees (keep the nicer Tanner Tees locked in the jobox, not left out like the larger, rubber tees)
	+ Orange cones for use in practice stations
	+ Bucket with wiffle balls for hitting drills
	+ Extra buckets to use for wiffles or balls during practice
	+ Extra Tee-Ball or Safety 5 (Coach-Pitch) balls
* Items stored in Soundview 2 jobox:
	+ First-aid kit and ice packs
	+ Batting tee for games
	+ Extra Tee-Ball balls
	+ Set of throwdown bases to set up at 45’

**PRACTICE GUIDANCE**

Most, if not all, of the practice slots at Crown Hill Field will be assigned to two teams to be shared. This means each team will spend 30 minutes in the infield and 30 minutes in the outfield. Please coordinate with your practice slot partner to figure out how you will share the time.

The main skills being taught include throwing, catching, fielding, hitting, and baserunning. So consider introducing various drills/stations that focus on some aspect of those skills. Since you are dividing time between the infield and the outfield, also target certain drills for the proper part of the field you are using. Outfield time is best for practicing throwing and catching, and perhaps one wiffle ball station (either off a tee or with coach-pitch). Infield time is best for ground balls, throwing to a base, hitting wiffles off a tee (into the fencing; set up 3 tees in a row), and baserunning. Set up three or four stations, so players are divided into smaller groups of 3-5. This keeps them more active, learning more, and not getting distracted/bored by standing around for longer periods.

If you share a practice slot with a team in the same division as you, you might consider doing 20-30 minutes of scrimmage, especially during the second half of the season when the players are up to speed on the main skills.

Some skills to focus on with individual players:

* Throwing – ball is pointed backward when drawing back the throwing arm; glove is pointed toward target when drawing back the throwing arm; step toward the target when throwing; practice underhand toss throws to 1B when playing P or 2B
* Catching – catch the ball in the pocket or webbing of the glove, not the hand (catching is often the latest skill to develop)
* Fielding – move the feet to “center” the ball when fielding; sit down into the ground ball to get low; keep the glove down on a ground ball and move up to adjust to the ball; position throwing hand next to the glove to speed up transfer
* Hitting – feet in line with pitcher and stance the width of shoulders or just wider; slightly bent knees to help with athletic balance; back elbow up (to avoid upper cuts); hands back to encourage forward motion only on the swing; bat cocked behind helmet, not up or backwards; stress eyes watch ball to contact with bat (not looking up or pulling head out before contact); making contact at point even with front foot, not mid-stance (this correlates to how Tee-Ball players should stand); quiet feet, meaning twisting on balls of feet is good, but stepping with feet is to be avoided, especially the back foot; for advanced players, work on engaging hips/core, so swing is not all arms/upper body (the hips start and lead the swing)
* Baserunning – run full speed through first base (don’t have to stop right at that base), but learn to stop at second or third base; baserunning is counterclockwise from base to base

Some practice drills/stations to consider doing:

* Outfield area
	+ Playing catch, focusing on a particular aspect of the throwing or catching technique
	+ Tossing easy popups. Catching a ball is a hard skill, so don’t expect too much too early.
	+ Setting up one or two hitting stations with wiffles, using either a tee or coach-pitch. Using tees is highly encouraged, even for coach-pitch players as the hitting technique is the focus.
* Infield area
	+ Line up 3-4 batting tees along the 3rd base line about 5 feet from the fencing. Pile 5-10 wiffles next to each tee. Players hit wiffle balls into the fencing and work on technique. A coach/adult provides guidance/feedback and helps place balls on the tee to speed things up. Encourage bat safety during this drill.
	+ Relay races between home and first. Divide team into two groups. Please one ball per player on either side of first base. Players start on either side of home plate. They take turns running down, picking up a ball, and returning to home plate where they slap hands as they run by to start the next runner.
	+ Running of the bases. Take turns, one after the other, running from home to first base, making sure to not slow down as they run through the base. Next, trying running from first to second base, but focus on coming to a stop on the base. Next try running the full home to home distance around the bases. When the runner crosses second base, start the next runner. Repeat until the entire team has run the bases.
	+ Ground balls. Roll ground balls to a player. They field the ground ball, run toward you, and underhand toss it back to you before returning to the ground ball line. Vary the ground balls to make them move left and right, so they get used to moving their body to try to “center” the ball before fielding it.
	+ For Tee-Ball where players rarely hit a ball into the outfield grass, you can scrimmage during your infield time.

**GAME & PRACTICE RULES**

Aside from keeping players safe, our main emphasis is teaching good sportsmanship, the basic rules of baseball/softball, and the dynamics of team play. Skill levels and attention spans at this age mean that games and practices need to be limited in length and complexity. The basic rules are:

1. Practices last exactly one hour.
2. Tee-Ball games last about 50 minutes, and Coach-Pitch games last about 70 minutes (the exact timing will vary depending on how the game is going). Aim to complete at least 3 innings if possible.
3. Arrive 10-15 minutes early for games to give your player enough time to warm up.
4. Cheer for good plays on both teams, for good teamwork, and for good sportsmanship.
5. Scores are not kept or emphasized.
6. Every player gets a chance to play each position (throughout the year), though we do not field a catcher for Tee-Ball or Coach-Pitch.
7. A coach/adult will play the catcher position. In Tee-Ball this means putting the ball on the tee. In Coach-Pitch this means taking the ball on the bounce, so you are not too close to the batter (in case of wild swings or thrown bats). This speeds up play considerably, and allows for the coach/adult to help batters with positioning, stance, and form.
8. Rotate defensive positions each inning, or even halfway through an inning. The goal is for every player to spend time in both the infield and the outfield.
9. All players bat every inning regardless of how many outs are made. Create a different batting order for every game (e.g., jersey number from low to high and then high to low, players by height from short to tall and then tall to short, etc.).
10. There is no on-deck circle; batters remain in the dugout (bats down) until they are up to bat. This is an important safety rule.
11. There is no leading off or stealing of bases. Runners may leave the base when contact is made by the batter.
12. In Tee-Ball:
	1. A maximum of 11 players will take the field each inning (5 in the IF and 6 in the OF). Teams with more than 11 players will keep extra players in the dugout and rotate with defensive substitutions each 5-6 batters. In other words, about halfway through the other team’s batting order, the coaches should substitute in the players who were out.
	2. Batters stay on their base even if they are “out.”
	3. Batters may advance just one base per at bat, except for the last batter of the inning when the players can run all the bases after the ball is put in play. Base runners should not keep running just because a play was not made by the fielders (except for the last batter in the inning).
13. In A Baseball/Softball (Coach-Pitch):
	1. A maximum of 10 players will take the field each inning (5 in the IF and 5 in the OF). Teams with more than 10 players will keep extra players in the dugout and rotate with defensive substitutions each 5-6 batters. In other words, about halfway through the other team’s batting order, the coaches should substitute in the players who were out.
	2. Coaches stand about halfway to ¾ between the pitching rubber and home plate (rarely on the rubber) and preferably pitch underhand or from one knee unless a player requests otherwise. If a player doesn’t get a hit after 6-8 pitches, they hit from a tee. The coach helping the batters with technique and stance will also serve as the “catcher.”
	3. Batters and runners may advance up to two bases per at bat, except for the last batter of the inning when the players can run all the bases after the ball is put in play.
	4. If a batter or runner is forced out, tagged out, or a fly ball is caught, the player who is “out” should return to the dugout.
14. After your practice or game, make sure you clear all team items out of the dugout. If you are the last practice or game for the day (i.e., 6:00 practice slot on weekdays or last game slot on Saturday afternoon), put away all items that belong in the jobox. You can leave the bases installed on the field (note that this is a change from prior years). You should then make sure to lock the jobox and, as needed, lock up the Honey Bucket at Crown Hill.
15. If you find any items left behind that are considered “Lost & Found” items, email the Crown Hill coach group and identify what was found.

**QUESTIONS OR NEEDS?**

If you have any Coach-Pitch or Tee-Ball questions whatsoever, contact Steve Ege at (206) 471-9588 (stevekege@gmail.com) or Tracy Lemke at (206) 498-1909 (ts\_lemke@hotmail.com). If you have any needs regarding equipment/gear, contact Steve…for player or coach uniform needs, contact Tracy.

**SUMMARY**

Have fun this season, and thanks again for volunteering your time as a coach!

Play Ball, and Go Northwest!!