



Official Rules of
T-Ball

Revised December, 2012



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ELIGIBILITY

BAA's T-Ball program is open to boys and girls, ages four to five. Players who will attain the age of six prior to May 1st, barring extenuating circumstances, should play PAL Ball. For instance, children who have never played organized ball may be placed in the T-Ball program by the commissioner on an individual basis. Each participating player must be registered on an official BAA registration form, having paid the specified fee. Proof of age may be requested.

ROSTERS

Each team shall list their players on an official BAA T-Ball roster, provided on-line. Each roster shall carry a minimum of eleven, and a maximum of fifteen, players unless otherwise directed by the T-Ball Commissioner.

UNIFORMS & EQUIPMENT

BAA shall furnish the *team equipment* necessary for participation in the program. Team equipment shall consist of batting tee, batting helmets (5), catcher's protective helmet & mask, reduced injury factor or "Safe-T-Balls," scorebook and duffle bag. Bases, pitching rubber and home plate shall be provided on game fields only. Bats, practice bases, etc., are not provided.

Each player shall be given a t-shirt and cap, color-matched for his or her particular team. These are to be worn at all official games and may be kept by the player after the conclusion of the season. Players may wear shorts, baseball pants, sweat pants, etc., and either tennis shoes or baseball cleats. If cleats are worn, they must be rubber or plastic.

PLAYING FIELD

The T-Ball field should be laid out in the same fashion as a regulation baseball field, but with the following exceptions:

- 1) Bases should be set at 60', pitching rubber at 36'.
- 2) A seven-foot arc shall be inscribed, measured from the back tip of home plate, beginning on the first base line and terminating on the third base line.

Players shall remain on, or in, the area adjacent to their bench, and in ground that is declared out-of-play. The home team shall occupy the third base bench, while the visitor shall occupy the first base bench. Should the field not have benches per se, the umpire shall define the appropriate areas for each coach. Spectators should remain on the bleachers, if such are provided, or in an appropriate place in the area declared to be "out of play."

Should circumstances demand it, the commissioner may direct BAA's T-Ball program to play one or more official games on ground without a skinned infield or backstop. In such a case, the playing field will be laid out as described above.

POSITIONING ^{the} DEFENSIVE TEAM

The defensive team shall be positioned in the same fashion as a regulation baseball team, with the exception of having an additional (fourth) outfielder. The catcher shall be positioned at a distance **DIRECTLY** behind the batter that is both safe and out of the way of the umpire and/or batting coach. Catcher **MUST** wear the protective helmet & mask at all times. The pitcher shall begin play with both feet contacting the pitching rubber until the ball is put in play; infielders shall position themselves on or behind the baselines; outfielders shall position themselves at or beyond the edge of the skinned infield or, if the infield is too large, at a distance determined appropriate by the umpire.

One defensive coach is permitted to position himself in the infield or outfield, as it suits him, and does not interfere with play. He may verbally direct his players during the entire time that they are on the field, but is not permitted to physically assist them in making a play.

POSITIONING ^{the} OFFENSIVE TEAM

While on offense, each batter, on-deck batter and baserunner must wear a batting helmet. The batter shall position himself at the batting tee; the on-deck batter shall position himself in the on-deck circle, or in an area defined by the umpire; base runners shall maintain contact with their bases until the ball is put in play.

The offensive team is permitted a coach at third base, a coach at first base and a coach at home plate. Base coaches may verbally direct but not physically assist. The batting coach may physically assist the batter in his or her preparation for batting, but may not physically assist during the swing or run to first base. The batting coach also has the responsibility to remove the batting tee, after the ball is put into play, when a runner is attempting to score.

PUTTING ^{the} BALL ⁱⁿ PLAY

The coach shall place the ball on the batting tee and assist his hitter in his or her preparation for batting. The batter shall then wait for the umpire to call out, "Play ball!" When this command is heard, the batter will attempt to bat the ball into play. A fair ball must travel, or come to rest, beyond the seven-foot arc described earlier. Failing that, the umpire will throw up his arms and declare, "dead ball!"

If the ball is fair, baserunners and batter/runner may advance with liability to be put out. Force outs and tag plays are in order as defined by the rules of baseball. Runners may not leadoff or steal. There are no balks, no strike outs, no walks and no infield fly rule. Batters may not purposely bunt. If, in the umpire's opinion, a batter has purposely attempted to deaden the ball, he shall call "dead ball" and direct the batter to hit again. If the batter purposely attempts another bunt, he or she will be declared out.

Runners may continue to advance until they are put out, score a run or until play is stopped by reason of the ball being thrown to the home plate area or out of play. Defensive coaches should direct their players to throw the ball home in order to stop play. If, in the judgment of the umpire, a baserunner or batter/runner had begun advancing to the next base prior to the point of the throw, he shall allow that runner or runners to advance. If not, he shall direct them to return to the last base safely touched prior to the point of the throw. The "point of the throw" is the moment at which the ball leaves the thrower's hand. A ball will be considered to have been thrown home if it travels beyond the pitching rubber toward the general area around home plate. Base coaches should exercise discretion and good sportsmanship in advancing their runners.

ENDING ^{an} INNING

Outs are registered on force outs, tag plays and caught fly balls. There is no limit to the number of missed swings or foul balls allowable to a given batter. He or she will remain at bat until the ball is put in play in fair territory. The offensive team's turn at bat shall have come to an end when:

- a) Three (3) outs are registered; or
- b) Five (5) runs are scored;

The inning is over at this point. No runs will be counted after the fifth run has crossed the plate, even if they score as a result of an ongoing play.

ENDING ^{the} GAME

The time limit to a BAA T-Ball game shall be one hour and ten minutes, "hard time". Hard time indicates that the game is over the moment the allotted time has elapsed, regardless of the score or the inning.

The umpire is the official time keeper. His timepiece and his discretion shall be the ultimate determining factor regarding the end of play.

PARTICIPATION

Free substitution shall prevail at all T-Ball games, meaning that players may be moved in and out of the game, as need be, without penalty. However, the umpire, at his discretion, may limit or disallow excessive movement while a team is on defense in order to accommodate speedy play. Coaches are cautioned to bear this in mind. Every player will bat in his or her turn in the batting order, regardless of whether or not they have played in the field.

Each player shall play three (3) outs on defense in a three inning game, and six (6) outs if their team plays four innings or more (assuming that player was available at the onset of play). Since T-Ball is a developmental program, coaches are encouraged to rotate players to various positions and to ensure, to the extent possible, equitable playing time for all.

COACH PITCH

BAA's T-Ball program does not allow coach pitch as an option for a player's at bat. Primarily, this is to speed the flow of the game in order to allow each player as many turns at bat and in the field as possible. Coach pitch, even when only a few are thrown, dramatically slows the game and puts unnecessary pressure on younger or less coordinated players. Coaches are encouraged, however, to pitch to their players in practice, particularly to the older players.

The BATTING TEE

Some coaches and parents will view the pitching prohibition as a setback. Some think the tee to be a poor substitute for a pitched ball. On the contrary, the batting tee is an invaluable tool both for teaching and grooving the baseball swing. It is utilized at the high school, college, and even Major League levels. Quite often, a Major Leaguer is sent to the batting tee in order to correct a problem or reinforce good mechanics.

Instead of viewing it as a hindrance, coaches should learn how to take advantage of this tremendous teaching aid. Here are a few tips to help you get the most out of it:

- 1) Place the tee. Generally, it is set on top of home plate. The location of the tee will determine where the batter is placed in the batter's box in order to allow him to extend his arms at the point of contact. Be sure that your players aren't 'bailing out', which often occurs when the hitter is set too close to the tee.

2) Check the hitter's feet, grip, bat position and head position. This is where the swing begins. Many books have been written to help coaches in this area. Dusty Baker's "You Can Teach Hitting" is an excellent resource.

3) Set the height of the tee. This is an area where many well-meaning coaches reinforce bad swing habits. Yes, Johnny can really launch the ball if you raise the tee. But he'll first have to drop his hands and then jerk the bat in a lusty uppercut to do it. That will cause problems that will take years to correct, if indeed you ever do. He'll have plenty of time later in life to develop a softball swing - *after* he's done playing baseball.

The proper swing path for a baseball player is from the shoulders *down* to the baseball. After all, guess where opposing pitchers will pitch him in a few years? Not to mention that you'll be yelling at him, "Hey - lay off that high one!" For this reason, we recommend that you set the tee no higher than the belt, which is roughly the midpoint of the strike zone. For some kids, that might mean removing the upper part of the tee before placing the ball.

4) REPETITION, REPETITION, REPETITION. Good habits need constant reinforcement. The bad ones are always looming there, waiting for the undisciplined hitter. No matter how boring or tiring this exercise may be, the good coach will be diligent in reinforcing the elements of a good swing for every batter, in every at bat. The batting tee is your friend. It is the hitter's friend. Use it properly and use it often.

Work^{that} Defense!

In T-Ball, the ball is put in play quite often. For this reason, coaches and parents should seize the opportunity to teach sound mechanics in fielding and throwing. The first year or two of pitch ball will afford far fewer fielding chances, so take full advantage of this foundational program. Coaches and parents often become impatient at this beginning stage and rush their child up to the next level of ball. Why is that a bad thing?

One year of growth and maturity makes a tremendous difference in a five or six year-old. Remember, they are still attempting to master basic motor skills. Pushing them into an age level beyond their own places unnecessary pressure on them, even if they enjoy some success there. Let them learn and develop at their rightful age level and only play them up if they are not being properly challenged there. Do not move them up just because mom and dad are bored.

Remember: T-Ball is a beginner's course in baseball. Just like musical instruction, baseball instruction must begin with sound rudiments and fundamentals. We're in this for the long haul, coach. So let's lay a solid foundation for the future and, most importantly, let's teach our kids to enjoy our national pastime. Good luck!!