

# ***HELENA FAMILY YMCA 2021 YOUTH T-BALL***



## ***Parent/Coach Handbook***

**Parent Information  
Volunteer Coach Information  
Player Information**

HELENA FAMILY YMCA  
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# ***Welcome Parents and Coaches to the Helena Family YMCA 2021 Youth T-Ball Season!***



## **Your Parent/Coach Handbook Includes:**

- Parent Information
- YMCA Youth Recreation T-Ball League Rules
- Volunteer Coach Information
- Description of Developmentally Appropriate T-Ball Skills and Drills

## **YOUTH SPORTS PHILOSOPHY**

The Youth Sports programs at the Helena Family YMCA give elementary-aged boys and girls the opportunity to learn sports skills in a supervised, low-competitive environment. We believe that participating in sports should be *FUN* and that every player should have an *EQUAL OPPORTUNITY* to play and *DEVELOP SKILLS*. These let kids enjoy youth sports by de-emphasizing winning and ensuring equal playing time for all players. Parent *SUPPORT* is encouraged in these low-pressure, sports program environments.

## **CARING, HONESTY, RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY**

The YMCA has made a national commitment to help young people learn the values of Caring, Honesty, Respect and Responsibility, all necessary to hold us together as a people. We seek to incorporate these values in all that we do and to partner with families in teaching these essential values to our young people. By teaching these values during the practices of this youth sports program, we hope to give participating children the opportunity to become better sports on and off the court. We have incorporated basic activities to be used by the volunteer coaches during practice time and before games that will assist in introducing the four values to the children.



## YMCA Coaching Responsibilities

Supervise a group of kids in a safe and well-maintained environment.

Develop a lesson plan for practices and the season teaching the fundamentals of the sport.

Contact all the families on your roster as soon after the coaches meeting as possible. Inform them of your team name, practice time, and location.

Inform parents about YGametime, where they can go to find schedules and all necessary information, at the first practice. You may distribute a roster or create a group email or group text for communication, as well as give out your contact information.

Attend all games and practices. If you cannot make a practice or game, ask another parent to sub for you. If possible, provide the substitute coach with a practice plan or game plan. Please do not cancel practice or re-schedule games unless it is an emergency. This causes a lot of frustration for the other families on your team as well as the families on the other team.

Designate a team parent to assist with a snack schedule.

Know the rules at each level of play. The YMCA modifies the rules for most sports to create a positive experience for the children. As children grow and their skills get better the rules grow with them.

Maintain good relationships with parents and communicate your teaching philosophy and goals.

Serve as a role model for all participants, staff, and families by behaving respectfully while participating in all activities with an enthusiastic attitude.

Emphasize skill development and fun, while de-emphasizing the importance of winning and losing.

Team participant personal contact information will only be shared with the YMCA and your child's coach. A coach's personal contact information is only shared with the YMCA and team participants.

To view your child's team schedule, go to [YGameTime.com](http://YGameTime.com) and follow the instructions for logging in. You must know your child's team name.



# ***VOLUNTEER COACHES***

Welcome you to what we hope will be a very rewarding experience for both you and the boys and girls on your team!

Our Helena Family YMCA youth sports and character values programs are much more than just another youth sports league. We hope the opportunity to help youngsters develop their full potential, clarify their values, and develop lasting friendships will be fun for you.

We hope that you will be patient and understanding with the children, and keep in mind the ultimate values and philosophy that we are trying to teach. Sports are not the end result, but a tool to reach and teach the youngsters. Work with every player on the team, encouraging them to use and develop their skills. Teach fair play and value of FUN over keeping score. Teach respect for themselves, their team members, the opposing team, volunteer coaches and officials.

Thank you for taking the time in your busy schedule to help a youngster in this important program!

## **Summer T-Ball 2021**

**Games:** Coaches will let parents and players know where and when games will be played.

**Practices:** Practice site and time will be determined by the coach at the coaches meeting. Practices are usually one hour in length and one time per week. Some teams may only have time to get in one practice before their first scheduled game.

**Game Schedules:** Coaches will let parents know how to find team schedules, by going to [YGameTime.com](http://YGameTime.com).

**Snack Schedule:** Although not necessary, many kids "live" for the after-game snack! If you cannot be a coach or assistant coach perhaps you can help the coach by creating a snack schedule for the team.

**Shirts:** Coaches will distribute game jerseys at the first GAME.

**Pictures:** Picture days are still to be scheduled so be on the lookout for more information from your coach.

**Equipment/Uniform:** The uniform of a T-Ball player is a jersey, shorts/sweats, socks, and shoes/cleats. Players may wear tennis shoes, cleats made of soft plastic, or a good athletic shoe that fits. Please do not wear metal cleats, jewelry, or any other potentially injurious items. Players will need a baseball glove.

**Weather:** It is our policy to cancel games only in extreme weather conditions. If games must be cancelled an email/text blast will go out as soon possible. If you are unsure, contact your coach.

If the coach decides to cancel practice due to weather, it is up to the coach to notify the Parent's of the players on the team. It is at the discretion of the coach and not YMCA staff to cancel practices. If you are unsure, call your coach.

**Cancellations and make-up games:** Games may be cancelled due to inclement weather. If possible, make-up games will be scheduled during a practice time.

**YMCA Philosophy:** In YMCA Youth Sports, we strive to provide a structured environment emphasizing fun and learning, while teaching sportsmanship and teamwork. In YMCA Youth Sports, every child gets the opportunity to participate equally, regardless of his or her ability. *Everyone Plays at the YMCA!*

# Helena Family YMCA Youth Sports Program

## Parent Agreement

### As a parent in the Helena Family YMCA's Youth Sports Program:

- 1.** I will remember that children participate to have fun and that the game is for youth, not adults.
- 2.** I will inform the coach of any physical disability or ailment that may affect the safety of my child or the safety of others.
- 3.** I will learn the rules of the game and the policies of the program.
- 4.** I (and my guests) will not engage in any kind of unsportsmanlike conduct with any official, coach, player, or parent.
- 5.** I (and my guests) will be a positive role model for my child and encourage sportsmanship by showing respect and courtesy, and by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, officials and spectators at every game, practice, or other sporting event.
- 6.** I will teach my child to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts peacefully.
- 7.** I will teach my child to treat other players, coaches, officials, and spectators with respect regardless of race, creed, color, sex, or ability.
- 8.** I will praise my child for competing fairly and trying hard, and make my child feels successful every time.
- 9.** I will emphasize skill development and practice and will focus on how this will help them be successful.
- 10.** I will respect the officials and their authority during games and will never question, discuss, or confront coaches at the game field. I will take time to speak with coaches at an agreed upon time and place.
- 11.** I will demand a sports environment for my child that is free from drugs, tobacco, and alcohol and I will refrain from their use at all sports events.

# 2021 T-BALL RULES

## **Mission Statement:**

The Helena Family YMCA is a non-profit organization dedicated to building self-esteem and enriching spirit, mind, and body for persons of all ages and economic levels.

## **Program Philosophy:**

YMCA Youth Sports emphasizes skill-development, sportsmanship, and teamwork. In YMCA Youth Sports, players are guaranteed equal playing time, regardless of skill level. Although competition can be a healthy tool, in YMCA Youth Sports we de-emphasize winning and losing and concentrate on fun and learning.

## **Number of Players:**

Teams will fill all eight positions (we will not use the catcher position), and any extra players can be placed in the outfield so every child can play.

## **Positions:**

Players in all Grade Divisions should be placed in traditional baseball positions, which include the following;

*Pitcher*  
*1<sup>st</sup> Baseman*  
*2<sup>nd</sup> Baseman*  
*3<sup>rd</sup> Baseman*  
*Shortstop*  
*Outfielders*

Players should rotate positions every inning or at least every game. Although, the ball is not pitched, a player should field in the pitching position. **THE PITCHER MUST BE ROTATED EVERY INNING.**

## **Equipment:**

The uniform of a T-Ball player is a jersey, shorts/sweats, socks, and shoes/cleats. Players may wear tennis shoes, cleats made of soft plastic or a good athletic shoe that fits. No metal cleats jewelry, plastic hair bands, chains, or any other potentially injurious item is allowed.

## **Ball:**

### **Ages 3-4 and 5-6**

#### **RIF1SL:**

RIF level 1 (ages 6 & under)  
Medium firm Poly-Core  
Synthetic cover  
Softest and safest

## **Rules:**

1. Standard baseball rules will apply to all levels with age-appropriate changes.
2. Home team is decided by coaches by using coin flip or rock, paper, scissors.
3. The ball is not pitched but hit off a tee located in back of home plate. The coach of the offensive team (team hitting) will place the ball on the tee and ensure that the defensive team is ready.
4. The batter may swing at the ball after the coach has placed it and ensured that the defense is set.
5. Batters will be allowed five attempts to hit the ball once placed on the tee. If after five swings, the batter is not successful, he/she will be awarded 1<sup>st</sup> base.
6. Batters are not permitted to bunt. If such an incident occurs, the batter will be made to bat again.
7. Games will be officiated by the coaches or parent volunteers.
8. Players are not permitted to steal or lead off base and can only leave the base once the ball is hit.
9. The Infield Fly Rule will not be called or used.
10. Base runners can not advance on overthrows at any time the ball leaves the infield.
11. Defensive players should not obstruct a base runner's path or fake a tag at any time.
12. No substitutes will be allowed. All players should play the field.
13. Batting orders are set at the beginning of the game and can be changed between innings so that everyone may get the chance to bat in the clean up position.

14. All players will advance only one base on each hit ball. If a player is called "out" they will remain on base and continue to play as if they were not out.
15. The entire team will have a turn at bat each inning, with the final batter in the line-up hitting "clean-up" or a homerun.
16. No score book or score will be officially kept.
17. All infielders must remain in the infield and cannot move or be placed behind the designated pitcher's circle until the ball is struck.
18. The ball must be hit in fair ground to be playable. Fair ground will be defined as anything in front of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> baselines, even if struck over the 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> base.
19. The tee must be standing in a vertical position without slanting or leaning.
20. If a hit ball hits home plate first then advances forward into fair play, it will be called a dead ball and must be re-teed and hit by the same player. This will count as a swing.

### **Coaches Positions:**

**Defense** - Coaches of the defensive team can be stationed in the field of play, with a minimum of one coach and any assistant coaches/parent volunteers who may want to help out. At no time can the coaches/assistants/parent volunteers physically participate in a play or touch a player while the ball is in play. If this occurs, the player is called safe and awarded the advancing base. If a ball is struck and hits a coach/assistant/parent volunteer while he/she is standing in fair ground, the batter will be awarded 1<sup>st</sup> base only.

**Offense** - Coaches will stand behind the batter and offer instruction. Coaches on offense will help tee the ball up and adjust the tee accordingly. Coaches will also want to make sure the on-deck batter is in the on-deck circle and ready/waiting for his/her turn to hit. Coaches may also assist at the bases to help players with running the bases.

### **Length of Game:**

All games will be a minimum of two, maximum of four innings or 45 minutes for Ages 3-4 Division and an hour time limit for the Ages 5-6 Division, whichever comes first. After 45 minutes/hour time limit, the game will be called no matter the batting order or inning.

### **Coaches Responsibility:**

YMCA Youth Sports Coaches should be role models for their teams and should conduct themselves in a proper manner. Competitiveness should be de-emphasized, and sportsmanship should be overly emphasized. Coaches are also responsible for the conduct of their team and the parents of their players. Coaches can be removed from their position if it is determined by the director of the program that he/she has exhibited behavior detrimental to the philosophy.

### **Weather Policy**

It may be necessary to cancel games due to severe weather. We will follow the National Weather Service and the American Red Cross "30/30 Rule". Simply stated, if you see lightning and/or hear thunder roars before you can count to 30, and then seek shelter. Also, we will not allow games to resume until at least 30 minutes have passed since the last roll of thunder. The safest place to seek shelter is in your car. The dugouts are not safe in a lightning storm. Please respect these safety guidelines and seek shelter if a game has been cancelled due to severe weather. The YMCA will make every effort to help coaches reschedule games.

### **Coaches Behavior**

Coaches will be held accountable for their teams, their parents', and their own behavior. The YMCA encourages fair play, sportsmanship, teamwork, and fun. At the YMCA, we build strong kids, strong families, and strong communities. Our values come first.

**YMCA Youth Sports emphasizes skill-development, sportsmanship, and teamwork. We de-emphasize competition and focus on the fun and learning that sports can provide. The YMCA also promotes equal playing time for all participants. All players must play an equal amount of playing time in each game.**

## *Umpiring Games*

For our T-Ball League, each team is to provide one coach or assistant to umpire the game. The coaches oversee all game activities and make sure each team abides by the rules of the game. His/her decisions are final.

All coaches, volunteers and parents should be familiar with the philosophy of the YMCA T-Ball program and assist in its implementation during games.

The philosophy of our coaches during games is to lean towards allowing the kids to learn during play. Some latitude should be extended regarding running the bases and hitting the ball off the tee.

**During the game, coaches can help to create a learning environment by explaining rules to the players. If players make mistakes, coaches should show them how to play the ball correctly. Occasionally, it may be useful to stop the game and explain a rule or a call. When the ball is not in play, coaches are encouraged to give players of both teams' tips on running, hitting, catching, throwing and other basic skills.**

## *Game Time Reminders*

- **Please remember to start your games on time.**
- **Games are self umpired. If you need additional help, please ask a parent to assist you.**
- **Continue to focus on skill and technique development such as hitting, running the bases, catching, throwing and other basic skills.**
- **Always remember to implement the YMCA Character Development values into practices and games. These 4 core values are: Caring, Honesty, Respect and Responsibility.**
- **PARKING: Since there are a lot of activities on practice nights and game days, we recommend that you arrive at least 15 minutes early to allow enough time to park and check in.**

## **DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES**

Children develop and learn at their own individual pace. The developmental information below is only a guide, so use your best judgment when it comes to getting through to your players. Every team will have children that overlap into both developmental levels.

### **Ages 3-4 Division:**

- Rules are not important to this age group. They will not remember most of the rules you give them.

#### **Be sure to:**

- Remind them which way they are to go. They will not know the meaning of some words such as "run hard."
- Tell them, show them, draw pictures, demonstrate - each child learns in a different way.
- The first two weeks of play are usually chaotic. Take it slow and easy, and above all, HAVE FUN!

### **Ages 5-6 Division:**

- At this age they love rules. They like to know what is going on and what they are supposed to be doing.
- Explain some of the rules. Do not overwhelm them. Each week add a few more tips.
- Offer tips but also allow players to make choices on their own.
- It is a good idea to think of yourself as a facilitator rather than controlling each child's every move.
- Above all, HAVE FUN!

### **All Grade Levels**

- Make sure all team members are kept active as much as possible.
- Avoid long lines with one player going at a time.
- Use assistant coaches or parents to split up the team, allowing you to have more kids active at one time.

# Potential Weekly Drill Sequence for Practice

## **WARM-UP (5 MINUTES)**

Tell your players that every practice will begin with a WARM-UP time, a brief and fun session to prepare them to practice and play their best. Discuss with them the importance of warming up. A good illustration is that of how on a cold morning a car needs to warm-up before it runs properly. A cold car runs rough and stalls. Our bodies are somewhat the same way. Have your team form a circle and do repetitions of a few of the stretching and conditioning exercises listed later in this manual.

## **SKILL FOCUS (25 Minutes)**

Explain to your players that the first part of your practices will be spent developing the fundamental skills of T-Ball: hitting, base running, catching, throwing, ball handling and team play, while many skills will overlap during a single practice, each week you will make sure to concentrate on a particular skill. Review previously taught skills each week. With very young players, try to be creative, make drills short and fun.

## **Team Talk - Values Discussion (10 Minutes)**

Sit your team down in a circle and let them know that some time is set aside in every practice for discussion of important things.

## **SCRIMMAGE (20 Minutes)**

The end of each session will be some type of scrimmage using different types of games concentrating on the skills they've been working on during the practice.

# **WARM UP EXERCISES**

## **STRETCHING EXERCISES**

- **Arm circles:** Rotate arms forward and backward, big and small circles.
- **Jumping jacks:** From a standing position, swing arms over head while moving feet sideward in a single jumping motion.
- **Trunk twister:** Rotate the upper body opposite the lower body, twisting at the waist, alternating sides.
- **Bending forward:** Hinge forward at the hips, reaching hands toward the toes.
- **Bent-knee sit-up:** Lying on the ground, on your back, bend knees to almost 90 degrees with feet flat on the ground. With hands gently supporting the back of the head, crunch head toward knees, lower back to start position, then up again, etc.
- **Push-ups:** Set up in a plank position, on knees or toes, arms extended with hands below shoulders. Bend elbows at 45-degree angles, bringing upper body closer to the ground, then push up to starting position.
- **Windmill:** With arms stretched out to the side, touch the opposite foot in a rhythmic count.
- **Forward crawl stroke:** Hinge forward at the hips, rotate arms in circles as if swimming forward.
- **Alternate knee hug:** Lie on the back, lift knee to chest and press close with moderate force.
- **Lunge stretch:** step one foot forward in a long stride, with front knee not passing the toes. Back leg extended behind. Hold for 5 seconds, switch leg positions.

# CONDITIONING EXERCISES

After players are loose, lead them in two conditioning drills. Include one or two short conditioning drills in each practice session. Point out that such drills help players improve reaction time, agility, and endurance.

- **Wind sprints:** Have players line up and at your signal run ten-yard sprints. After each sprint, line up and repeat.
- **Wave drill:** Players move left, right forward, backward, reacting to hand signal of coach. Players react quickly by watching signal.
- **Running drill:** At the signal, all players run forward. At the next signal, players cut and run to the right, then at the signal players run forward, then left. Repeat for length of field.
- **Snake drill:** Five players line up about three yards from each other. Player at the back of the line takes the ball and runs forward around players and back to his position. He then hands the ball to the player in front of him who repeats the drill.
- **Back flutter kick:** Lying on their backs, players support their low back by placing hands, palms down, under the seat. Extend both legs at 45-degree angle above the ground and alternate lift/lower in a flutter movement. Keep feet and legs from touching the ground.
- **Running drill:** Players line up on goal line. At the signal, all players race to the first zone line, jog back to the goal line. Entire field may be covered, depending on age of players.

Be enthusiastic so the team will accept the warmup time as a fun part of your practice. Share the leadership too; your players can take turns leading exercises.

## SKILLS & DRILLS

*These drills are arranged under major skill headings in ascending order of difficulty with the easiest at the beginning. Many of the drills have variations which increase their difficulty. Coaches working with older players may want to change the names of the drills to something more appropriate for that grade level.*

### Using Drills

Here are some guidelines to help you use drills effectively:

1. Use individual and partner drills frequently. These give each player more of an opportunity to practice and handle the ball than group drills do.
2. Use group drills (a) when scrimmaging with your team, (b) for hitting when working on hitting off the tee (c) to practice teamwork, (d) to slow down the pace. Group drills tend to leave players standing around.
3. Arrange your players so that everyone has room to practice at the same time. This ensures plenty of activity. It also allows a youngster to practice and make mistakes without fear of being ridiculed in front of teammates.
4. Drills do not have winners and losers. It is not necessary (or helpful) to rank players by who did best and worst.

**Improving glove hand coordination:** Cut off the bottom of a plastic gallon container. Turn the jug upside down with the handle in the glove hand of your player. Toss tennis balls to the player and have them catch the balls with the jug.

**Improving a hitter's swing:** Practice hitting from the tee into the back stop. Pair left-handed coaches with right-handed batters (and right-handed coaches with left-handed batters). Have the coach stand on the other side of the tee from the player (mirror image) and show proper stance and swing. This gives the batter a good visual reference and the coach can make corrections easily.

*Any coach may take a left-handed batters' stance; be sure the hands and feet are placed in the correct position, so the coach is a mirror image of the player(s).*

**Batting techniques:** Set the tee even with the players belly button and have them extend their arms fully. Say, "measure up," and explain to the batter how hitting the ball on the fat part of the bat makes the ball go further.

This helps each batter stand the appropriate distance away from the ball, and swing level. Parents and players, who are waiting to bat, encourage the batter.

**Teaching players to watch the ball:** Using a tee, draw a large black dot on the ball. Have the batter concentrate on hitting the dot and watching the dot until after their swing is complete. Using the tee helps to keep their swing level. They will get it - repetition is the key.

**Improving throwing and catching:** Put the gloves down and use a tennis or rubber ball. Roll grounders to them and instruct the players to use both hands.

Get the players used to using both hands, then graduate to gloves. This drill may also be used to improve catching line drives or pop ups

**Helping kids to learn their positions:** Put out small orange cones where all the positions are located helping them find their way and keeps them from straying away. It also keeps them from swarming to the ball when defending 'their area'. During the first practice, pair up the players giving them each a 'treasure map' showing the field and the position locations. Call out positions for them to run to. Working with a partner helps avoid any one player being embarrassed if they forget where to go.

**Throwing:** Have the player(s) make an L shape with their throwing arm and concentrate on hitting the coach's nose with the ball. Having a focal point helps players understand the ball will go where they aim. Your nose is about as good as focal point as any.

**Controlling swarming:** As a pre-drill used before *Calling the Ball* (a drill in the *T-ball Coaching* handbook) draw large circles in the infield dirt and ask one player to stand in each of the circles and "guard their circle." The player to whom the ball comes closest to, or the circle the ball comes closest to, fields the ball. In the event the ball travels between two circles, or right down the middle, the player who jumps first gets it and the other must back off. It is a good pre-drill to *Calling the Ball* in the handbook.

**Learning to play the lead runner:** Bring a large rubber ball that is easy to catch and play a game of kick ball. Have the player find the lead runner, move to position to catch the ball, and throw the ball to the appropriate base. At the next practice, go back to using a baseball. You will notice a lot of improvement in the players understanding of the game.

## **Remember, positive reinforcement!**

**Catch the Coach.** Coach runs from home plate to first base. After a few steps, coach shouts "tag me" to a player holding a ball, who runs after the coach and tries to tag him out. Coach to decide where/when/if the runner is successful.

**Catch the Players.** Coach starts four or more players about 10 seconds apart from home plate to circle the bases. Coach starts last, trying to tag the players [alternate: snatch off their caps.

**Crab Drill.** Player is in basic fielding set position stance, crouched forward with glove open and down. Player takes three or four steps as coach rolls the ball.

**Scoop or Pick-up.** Two players [or two rows of players] line up about 10 feet apart. From kneeling position, one player rolls the ball to the other. Repeat 10 to 15 times.

**Distraction.** Coach rolls the ball to a fielder, but another player runs in front of the fielder and tries to break the fielder's concentration on catching the ball.

**Track Meet.** Two players at home plate. At the "start", one runs to 3rd base, the other to 1st base. They continue running [in opposite directions] around the bases. First one to return to home plate wins.

**Note:** to avoid collisions, instruct the runner that begins via 1st base to touch 2nd base from the outside corner; the other runner, coming from 3rd base, touches the inside corner of 2nd base.

**Bounce to the Bucket.** Large basket or cooler put on a base. Outfielders try to throw and bounce the ball into the open container. Can be done as a game with 10 points for getting the ball in, 5 for hitting the bucket and 1 point for the nearest bounce, no matter where the ball ends up. This drill/game teaches throwing from the outfield to a base.

**Catch.** Two or more players play catch. Keep score of the number of successful catches.

**Catching Contest.** Players are in pairs and throw the ball back and forth between each other. Last pair that has not dropped a ball wins.

**Catching Flies.** Hit or throw fly balls to fielders by using a soft baseball, rubber ball or tennis ball. Repetition and practice are the key to success.

**Crow Hop.** Classic throwing drill. Player takes a short step and a hop in the direction of the intended throw.

**Dive.** Coach throws or hits ball to one side or the other of a fielder, who has to dive to make the catch. Then, throw to 1st base.

**Just Block It.** Coach hits ball directly to a fielder. Emphasis is on stopping the ball from getting through to the outfield. OK to just block the ball; [better, of course, to catch it.] Can be a game with a point scored from every block, two for a catch and zero if the ball is not stopped

**Run Down.** Two fielders and a runner, who tries to run from one base to another without getting tagged out. Participants rotate positions.

**One and Two.** Two players play catch. Thrower scores 2 points if ball is caught at or above the shoulders. 1 point if caught between waist and shoulders. No points if caught below the waist or not caught. First player to score 10 points wins.

**For additional drills and ideas go to this website:**

<http://www.qcbaseball.com/drills/drills1.aspx>

Remember -- have fun and be a good team player.

**“Inclusion of Character Values in Practices”**

# Weekly Character Values

## Team Talk Week #1

**In this first session spend some time getting to know each other. Make sure that each child has a chance to talk and be listened to. The coach's role is to ask questions and let each player share an answer. Cover such things as name, family, favorite sports, hobbies, etc. This is a good time this first practice to go over some basic terms:**

Ready position • Hitting • Throwing  
Catching • Offense • Defense

## *Team Talk - Values Discussion Week #2*

### **Introduction to the Four YMCA Character Values**

*(Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility)*

Ask the players to describe a good athlete (perhaps Albert Pujols or Derek Jeter). They may reply with words like "home run hitter" or "knows the rules". After a few responses, explain that these are qualities of an athlete and that all people have caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. Explain that these are also the qualities of a good athlete and someone you would like to have on your team. Next, say "You should notice most of the things we said about a good athlete are things everyone can improve on. We can all hit farther with practice and learn more about the rules. We will work on these things during practice. The same is true of the four qualities of a good person. We can all be more caring, honest, respectful, and responsible.

Each week, we will spend time talking about these qualities and how they can help us be better athletes, team members and people."

## **Team Talk - Values Discussion Week #3 (Caring Week)**

*Activity: Random Acts of Kindness*

Tell the players that one way of showing that you care is to do kind things for people. If someone from the other team is running, but they trip and fall, what would be the kind thing to do? Should you laugh or would it be better to help them up and make sure they are not hurt? Ask the players to think of ideas they could do to be kind to members of their family. (Examples: wash dishes, take out garbage, clean their rooms, help brothers or sisters with homework, etc.). Encourage each player to do one kind thing for each member of his or her family during the following week. During next week's practice time, ask the players to talk about their acts of kindness.

## **Team Talk - Values Discussion Week #4 (Honesty Week)**

*Activity: Honesty is the Best Policy*

Ask the players what sort of kind things they did for their families last week as a follow up on last week's discussion. Say, "Today we are going to discuss honesty. Honesty means to tell the truth and not to mislead or lie. In sports, honesty also means to play fair and not to cheat. Why is it important to be honest in sports? Do you think it would be fair if you cheated and, because of that, another team did not have fun? Explain to the kids that the worst thing that could come out of telling the truth is that the other team gets an out or scores a run but what would happen if your coach or parents found out you did not tell the truth? Let them know that everyone on your team will always play fair and, because of that, you are better players.

## **Team Talk - Values Discussion Week #5 (Respect Week)**

### Activity: Cheer for the Other Team

Discuss, with your players, the idea of cooperation versus competition. Point out that the other team makes the game possible. Ask the players to brainstorm ways in which they might show respect to the other team. (Examples include making positive comments to the other players, congratulating them for outstanding plays and shaking hands at the end of the game). Encourage the players to implement these ideas during the game. Conclude by explaining that players who show respect to others during the game are better players and more fun to play with.

## **Team Talk - Values Discussion Week #6 (Responsibility Week)**

### Activity: Describing Responsibility

Tell the players you are going to discuss responsibility today. Tell them a responsible player is something they should be. Ask the team what different players are responsible for. If someone comes close to the right answer, say "That's right. This person is responsible for catching the ball. Every player has a responsibility on the field, and this is what we will practice so you can do a good job with your responsibilities." Say "But, we have responsibilities besides what we do in a game. To be sure you understand what you are responsible for here; I will go over what they are. It is important for everyone to play fair, be kind to each other, listen to the official, your coach, and your parents at all times, to be respectful with the other team, to try your best and to have fun. Explain that by doing all these things, they will become great players and have a good time.

## **Team Talk - Values Discussion Week #7 (Winning and Losing)**

### Activity: Discussing Winning and Losing

Let your discussion center around winning and losing. They mean different things to different people. Let the kids discuss their ideas; remember there are no right or wrong answers. Some questions that might help set the mood for discussion:

- What makes someone a winner?
- Can you lose a game and still be a winner?
- Who makes you a winner?

## **Team Talk - Values Discussion Week #8 (What We Have Learned)**

### Activity: Discussing Team and Individual Progress

Lead the group in a sharing experience that will help them identify how much progress they have made over the last 7 weeks. (Remember it's always OK to pass).

- Have each player say the skill he/she is proudest of.
- Ask each player to say something about the game he/she knows now that they didn't when the season started.
- Ask each player to say what he or she liked most about Y T-Ball.