



DES PLAINES YOUTH BASEBALL

COACH'S HANDBOOK

2026

Des Plaines Youth Baseball

P.O. Box 2775 Des Plaines, IL 60016

<http://www.desplainesyouthbaseball.com>

On behalf of the DPYB Executive Board, we want to thank you for joining and supporting Des Plaines Youth Baseball and especially for devoting your time and talents to the development of our youth. Being part of youth baseball can be one of the most rewarding and long-lasting memories any child can have. While the talent among our players runs the full spectrum from newly initiated to the game to veteran players that have competed for years.

Des Plaines Youth Baseball wants to provide a REWARDING and FUN experience for ALL the players in our league. As managers and coaches, you have a special responsibility to the players and their families, ensuring the experience and development of each player is your first responsibility.

The victory is sweeter when all can contribute.

The true success of this combined league will not be measured in wins and losses, but measured in memories, and you are helping to make them!

If you have any questions regarding your division, please feel free to contact the division coordinators listed below:

League Division Coordinator: Brian Joyce: 773 547 3228 brian.joyce543@gmail.com

STARS: Jeff Ritzema: 847 922 2321 jeff.ritzema@gmail.com

Finch (A): Laura Rodriguez: 847 873 5683 lalicia22@gmail.com

Sparrow (AA): Mallory Fazio: 815 347 6910 mallory.fazio@yahoo.com

Falcon (AAA): Jonathan Jordan: 630 267 2076 educator23@yahoo.com

Raven (Majors): Brian Joyce

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your respective Division Coordinator BEFORE contacting any Executive Board member.

We wish you the greatest success this season. Thank you again for devoting your time and your talents.

Des Plaines Youth Baseball

League Executive Board Member Contact Information

President – Breanne Mears: 847 894 5433 – Breanne.mears@gmail.com

Vice-President – Scott Frew: 847 903 0624 – w.s.frew@gmail.com

Secretary – Jonathan Jordan: 630 267 2076 - educator23@yahoo.com

Division Coordinator – Brian Joyce: 773 547 3228 – brian.joyce543@gmail.com

Scheduler - Mark Mensching - (847) 399-7026 - metalhd@mac.com

Head of Rules/Umpires – Sam Rodriguez: 847 409 5239 srodriguez3002@yahoo.com

Rob Hudson - (847) 610-0334 - rjhuddy614@yahoo.com

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Concessions – Jeanette Weller: 708 785 3478 – Jeanette.zaura@gmail.com

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your Division Coordinator before contacting any Executive Board member.

If you are canceling, scheduling, or rescheduling a game, please contact the Head of Umpires, your Division Coordinator, the Concessions Coordinator, and Mark Mensching. They must notify umpires and concession workers and update the league schedule.

Coaches Code of Conduct

Baseball embodies the discipline of teamwork. They challenge players to improve skills and bring into play the excitement of strategy. Every player will eventually strike out, or is on the losing end of the score, but baseball always gives another chance for success in the next at-bat or game. Des Plaines Youth Baseball expects each manager and coach to follow the following Code of Conduct:

Sportsmanship

- I will promote good sportsmanship, teach good baseball skills and have fun in the process
- I will not overemphasize the value and importance of winning
- I will respect the coaches, players, and spectators of the opposing team before, during, and after the games, win or lose
- I realize, accept and will practice the principle that a team and leagues reputation is built not only on its playing ability but also in its sportsmanship, courtesy and manner.

The Parents and the League

I will maintain open communication with players and their parents. When approached by parents to discuss any issue, I will interact and respond in a courteous manner. I will support fundraising efforts, field improvement efforts, and concessionaire assignments along with other duties that may be assigned to teams from time to time.

The Team

I will conduct practices in an organized manner, with a planned agenda that focused on skill development appropriate for the skill level of their players. I will maintain open communication with players and parents to inform them of practices, games, and other responsibilities in an efficient timely manner.

Guiding Principles for Des Plaines Youth Baseball Coaches Baseball IS fun!

The main objective is to improve every player on your team, not to win games.

“Games won or lost are soon forgotten, the type of person you are will not” – Pete Doumit

“If you are successful in improving the skill level of all your players, you will be successful at coaching (the winning will take care of itself)” – John Wooden

Publicly praise and encourage.

Keep constructive criticism and correction for private individual conversations.

No one knows better than the player that just made a mistake. Encourage them to get ready for the next ball and save the instruction and correction when they come back to the dugout.

Keep in mind that, as a Little League coach, you are one of the most influential people your players will ever have in their lives. Don't fall into the trap of always criticizing failures without recognizing achievement and effort. If a kid is giving their all, recognize that fact, even if they are failing.

Support them, and they may amaze you - and themselves - with what they can do.

Be inventive and reward your players. Turn drills into contests - give points to different teams within your squad and watch the intensity level rise.

Raise the stakes by offering a small reward; a stick of sugarless gum will motivate a player like you wouldn't believe.

Keep them busy!

- Plan practices that keep things moving
- Minimize lines and lecture
- Use small group stations to maximize involvement
- Batting practice not reserved for 1 player hitting and 11 others standing

***Teach Safety – to be aware of swinging bats, thrown balls, how to get out of way of pitched ball (See Defensive Roll below) ***

Des Plaines Youth Baseball – Planning and running practices

Objective of practice – have clear objectives for what you want to accomplish in each practice

Equipment – know ahead of time what you will need during practice

Time – Establish a timeline for the practice and follow as closely as possible

Routine – have a standard routine for each practice (example: warm up, throwing/catching) so the players always know what to expect

Skills – know what skills you want to teach and how you plan to teach them

Small Group Work – the best way to keep the players busy is to utilize small groups. Engage assistant coaches or willing parents and divide the team into 2 or 3 smaller groups to work with on skills.

Game Situations – build practices around actual game conditions. This allows players to perform the skills under pressure of the game.

Closure – End practice on positive note – Ask players to review what they learned in today's practice. Let them know what to expect for the next practice or game.

Example Sample Practice

Warm up – dynamic – run around bases, be creative

Throwing and Catching – This time is very important in the development of your teams. Have players pair up according to skill level and toss to each other. One partner should be on the foul line and the other in the outfield.

Skills – Start Simple, create success based on individual skill level Game situations/Small Group Sessions Hitting

Closure – Re-emphasize throwing skills and fielding with two hands. Give players tips for practicing at home and set up next practice time.

Des Plaines Youth Baseball Point of Emphasis Teaching players how to avoid getting hit by pitched ball. The hitter stands frozen, bat glued to shoulder, afraid to move. Getting "plunked" by the pitch is the number one reason hitters don't hit. If they don't freeze, they step in the bucket, to get as far from the pitch as possible. Fear of being hit by the pitch has taken over, and coaches must not fail to recognize how difficult a problem this can be for some of their players. It can't be turned into a heroic act by telling them to "take one for the team". It can't be minimized by telling them it doesn't hurt — it does. The pain is real; the potential for serious injury is real; and your challenge is not to remove fear from the batter's box, but to give them proper techniques for reducing the risk.

Defensive Roll to Avoid Serious Injury - The safest method starts by turning with the pitch, away from the pitcher. This takes the face, hands, ribs, elbows and knees — all the exposed bones — away from the inside pitch.

If it hits you, it will be on the more "padded" backside.

Scrunch your head down, too, as tucked into your shoulders as possible — so the helmet protects the neck (a deeper tuck than the illustrations if you can.) And pull the bat down also — otherwise the ball could hit it which would count as a foul ball at best or create a pop up or even accidental fair ball

EQUIPMENT

Each coach will receive the following equipment. Coaches will be responsible to return all equipment given at completion of the season

- Equipment Bag
- 1 Set of catcher's gear – mitt, helmet, chest protector, shin guards (not STARS)
- Equipment box key
- Box of Game Balls
- Box of practice Balls

RULES

Please visit our website or CSYBA website to become familiar with rules for your division.

SCHEDULE

Teams will sign up for 1 weekday and 1 weekend practice at the draft. You can schedule additional practices once all coaches have 2 times and fields secured. Game schedule is located on our website.

Outfield Skills

Outfield Skills – Each Outfielder has somewhere to be on every play!

- Teaching the ability to track the ball – This is the number one skill and is one of the most difficult. Teach them how to move with a ball in the air (simple) and progress to thrown ball with gloves (difficult) teach players to run to the point where the ball will come down.
- Grip – Hold the ball across the seams when throwing – 4 seam grip provides help with accuracy and carry.
- Catch every fly ball above the eyes.
- Hit your cut-off man

Preparation:

- A. Each inning check wind direction by throwing grass in the air
- B. On sunny days, always have sunglasses with you. Check sun in path with home plate
- C. Keep all outfielders' gloves together in the dug out!

Stance:

- A. Have shoulders and feet square to the batter
- B. Hands off knees and take a creep step when pitcher releases the ball

Fly Balls:

- A. Call – “Mine Mine Mine”
- B. Always try to catch the ball on throwing arm side in order to get off throw more quickly
- C. Track ball all the way into the glove
- D. Always throw to cut off unless it is a short distance throw

Backing Up:

- A. Anticipate a bad throw on every play and sprint to your appropriate location
- B. Left Field: - back up any plays at 3rd base or a throw from the right fielder to 2nd base
- C. Centerfield; Back up any plays at 2nd base
- D. Right Field: - back up any plays at 1st base

Rundowns – Basic Rules

The ultimate goal of a rundown is “One throw at the right moment!”

Rules for the Thrower

- Make runner commit
- Establish a throwing lane
- Avoid ball fakes
- Arm up and out in front – throws like a dart
- Stay out of the runner’s way to avoid interference

Rules for the receiver

- Call for baseball by saying “Now”

Drills

Play rundown catch everyday as a part of throwing warm up

Two-line drill to work on mechanics with no runners

Game situations on the field

Throwing Mechanics

- Two finger grip across the wide seams (across where seams form a C)
- Loose wrist, fingers on top of the ball
- Point lead shoulder, step straight to target
- Ball in throwing position when lead foot hits the ground Catching Mechanics - “All defense is, is playing catch well.”
- Ball above the waist – fingers up; ball below waist-fingers down
- Catch everything out in front of body whenever possible – fly balls over throwing shoulder, ground balls inside glove side foot with glove below the ball
- 1-2-3 rhythm; 1 – ball hits glove at same time glove side foot hits the ground; 2 – step through to get throwing leg under the ball is being brought to throwing position; 3 – lead foot hits the ground and ball is released
- Always try to catch the ball in best possible position to throw it where you need to throw it • See fielding the ball as “changing the direction of the ball rather than catching and throwing; this instills quickness and anticipation in the fielder.

Baserunning

Running Mechanics

- A. Teach players to run on balls of feet “run like a Cadillac” (smoothly)
- B. Run with loose hands and loose jaw
- C. Elbows stay close to your body; hands don’t cross past center of your body – “don’t run with Popeye arms”
- D. Lift knees high and land on toes

Base-running Rules

- A. Run all balls out hard; don’t assume the defense will make the play
- B. Great base runners (great players) learn to anticipate a play ahead of time; know the possibilities and take advantage of opponent’s mistakes
- C. Run through first base not to first base

Sliding

- 1. Sliding is a controlled fall designed to do three things; stop on a base, avoid a tag, avoid collision with fielder or ball
- 2. Sliding Fundamentals; kick yourself in the fanny, slide on bent leg shin and back pocket, keep hand above when sliding to avoid jamming them, glide into the landing giving yourself room to slide into the base and slow down, turn your head away from the direction of the ball

Hitting Mechanics

1. Stance

- Balanced, athletic, relaxed
- Grip = middle knuckles of top & bottom hand should be almost lined up (draw a line on top pinky and bottom index finger for younger players)
- Back foot perpendicular to plate, NOT pointed backward toward catcher (common power leak). Overcorrect w/ pigeon toes, if necessary.
- Elbows down (back elbow is NOT lifted up); hands inside the back foot to begin
- Equal flex in the knees – not stiff
- Head halfway between the shoes, lined up with belly button
- Turn head to view pitcher with both eyes, not just one eye
- Bat lifted approximately 2 to 4 inches off back shoulder

2. Stride

- As batter takes a SMALL stride toward the pitcher, batter loads (“walks away”) from his/her hands
- Front shoulder and hip "headlights" are directly on the pitcher
- Bat angle at this point: imaginary laser beam comes out of the bottom of bat & points at catcher's feet
- As swing begins with a slightly descending blow - not an upper cut - back foot completely rotates and heel aligns above the toe (aka, “squash the bug”)

3. Contact

- Hands are palm-up (back hand) / palm down (front hand) at contact - - back arm not quite fully extended until follow through
- Hips rotate fully - - belt buckle should be facing pitcher
- Imaginary vertical “power line” from back knee up through head
- Weight on balls of feet, NOT on heels
- Extend arms after contact with full follow-through finish
- Player should finish balanced and ready to run

BATTING NOTES

- Bat selection: a good rule of thumb is “lighter is better.” Use the .20 second rule (player should easily hold bat out at shoulder length for 20+ seconds)
- Bat types – composite bats should not be used in cold weather (usually below 60 degrees)
- Utilize multiple stations during batting practice Goal = maximize player participation - minimize standing around!

Do not confuse the kids with over-correction!

Do your best to work on only one or two swing ideas per session.

Communicate between coaches so all are on same page

- “Dry” swings as a group: (1) Stance – (2) Stride – (3) Contact
- Tee (A-Rod hits 100+ balls per day off tee)
- Soft toss

- Batting practice

Use tennis balls or soft-core balls, especially on cold days, to build confidence and reduce bat sting; wiffle balls (or badminton birdies) are good if space is limited

Common Youth Baseball Mistakes

Throwing

Failing to square lower body and shoulders to the target

Little or no arm swing

Shortened Follow Through

Catching

Catching the ball off to the side of body and not centering the ball.

Not catching the ball with two hands (door frame concept – everything inside the door frame, catch with two)

Hitting

Poor balance in stance

Stepping in the bucket – stepping away and out of the batter's box

Being afraid of being hit by the ball

Dropping the rear shoulder (uppercutting)

Lunging or reaching for the baseball

Over striding

Pitching

No balance

Fingers under the ball

Rushing the delivery

Lack of trunk rotation

Incorrect placement of stride foot

Fielding

Poor Set-up position

Fielding the ball under legs not out in front

Fear of the baseball

Back-peddling to catch fly balls

Outfielders taking first step in

Catching the ball above head

Not fielding with two hands unless one handed catch is required