



West Hartford Youth Baseball League 2025 Training League Guidebook

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Welcome to the 2025 Training League season in the West Hartford Youth Baseball League! Our League is excited to be entering its 75th season of continuous operation. We would like to thank you for volunteering to coach this spring. If there were not volunteers like you, none of this would be possible. As a coach in our League, you will have a fun and rewarding experience, all while teaching our young players the great game of baseball.

This guidebook will serve as your reference for almost everything related to the season. However, please do not hesitate to reach out with questions at any time. We are thrilled to have you on board and are looking forward to a fantastic season!



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i. Equipment

1. Before practices begin at the end of April, an equipment distribution date will be scheduled. All managers will meet at Wolcott Park to pick up the equipment for their team.
2. Each team will receive the following at the distribution date: tee, set of throw-down bases, two dozen baseballs (special Training League balls), First-Aid kit, icepacks, picture day forms, jerseys for coaches and players, and hats for coaches and players. The baseballs can be used for both practices and games.
3. Please distribute the jerseys and hats at your first team practice or as soon as they are available.
4. (If issued a Jobox key)...The Jobox key can open all WHYBL Joboxes in town. This includes the ones at Sterling Field. In the boxes at Sterling Field, you will find extra bats and helmets in case some of your players do not have them. Please note that the only boxes at Sterling Field that can be opened with your key are the ones on Field 2 and Field 4. Please keep track of your key!
5. Bring ALL of your equipment to ALL practices AND games.

ii. Manager and Coach Responsibilities

1. As a manager or coach, your top priority and responsibility is **creating an enjoyable and safe experience for your players and families**. The Training League Division is all about encouraging young players to love the game and making sure that they have fun while playing baseball. Please make sure that all of your feedback to players is positive. We cannot stress this enough.
2. Effective and frequent communication between all parties is important. I will always send emails to both managers and coaches. It is incredibly important that you read all emails that you receive and reply to them (if necessary) within 48 hours.
3. All managers will have an account on the WHYBL website. You can log in at <https://leagueathletics.com/CPanel/Password.asp?org=WHYBASEBALL.COM>. Once you are logged in, it is important that you know how to navigate the basics of the website. To view your game schedule, go to Teams → Choose a Team → Training League → then select your team. Your schedule will appear on the right hand side of the screen. To view your team's roster, go through the same process. Once you get to your team's page, click on "Roster" on the left-hand side of the screen. Do not distribute information on the roster to anyone. Only use it to obtain contact information (email addresses) for your players' parents.

4. You also have the ability to email your entire team directly through the WHYBL website. Once you are logged in, hover over the “Admin” button in the upper right-hand corner of your screen. Click on Members → Email Members → then select your team from the column all the way to the right underneath “Assigned to Team(s)” and “Spring [year].” Click the blue “Find Members” button at the bottom of the screen and then you are ready to write your email.

5. Once the rosters are set (by the middle of April), managers should email the full game schedule for your team to your parents. At this point, you will want to recruit some additional parents who are willing to help you. This includes a few assistant coaches, as well as a “team parent” to help with other team-related activities (snacks/drinks, raffle tickets, etc.). The team parent essentially serves as a liaison between the League and your team.

6. Managers should send a weekly email to your parents with the date, time and location of that week’s practice and game(s). Parent communication is critical. Along with the weekly schedule, consider adding a few sentences to your email about how well the players are doing, what they are working on, etc. Parents love to hear this.

7. Managers are responsible for running a weekly one-hour practice on a weekday and a game on Saturday afternoons (and also a couple of Sunday afternoons). You can find more information about this in the “Practice and Game Schedules” section. Coaches are to help the managers with both of these activities.

8. If any significant injuries occur at a practice or a game, call that player’s parents immediately. If you cannot reach them, call Brendon at 860-913-9086. Even if you do reach the parents, please send a follow-up email to Brendon after practice so that he is aware of the injury.

iii. Coaching Resources and Requirements

All coaches are **required to pass a background check, complete abuse prevention training and complete concussion safety training** when asked. These links will be provided to you via email or the league coordinator, and should be completed prior to the season beginning or as soon as possible once requested to ensure top safety for all our players. The training courses (Concussion and Abuse Prevention safety training) are good for two consecutive years but may need to be renewed in the future if you continue to coach.

Additionally, coaches in WHYBL are **encouraged to seek Ripken Coaching certification**. This program costs a small fee for the Youth Baseball course but the certification is good for life. I have found this very valuable as I progressed as a coach through various levels of our league and can be revisited if you would like to refresh your memory about coaching specific skills in the future.

This online training can be found at the following website:
<https://us.humankinetics.com/blogs/babe-ruth-league>

iv. Practice and Game Schedules

1. Each team will be assigned a practice day and field. Brendon will coordinate this via email. It is recommended that practices run from 5:30-6:30 PM (based on field availability). All practices should be one hour long.
2. Game schedules will be posted to the WHYBL website. All games will be held at Sterling Field. Field 1 will be at the corner of Flatbush Ave and Price Blvd. The fields go counterclockwise from there, ending with Field 4 at the corner of Sidney Ave. and Price Blvd.



3. All games will start at 10:00 PM or 2:00 PM and will follow a strict one-hour time limit.
4. Please try to get your games in on the day/time that they are scheduled (weather permitting, of course). Training League games do not need full teams on each side in order to play (and feel free to field all players...no need for anyone to be sitting on the bench at this level. Just spread them out!) Also, if a manager cannot make a game or a practice, assistant coaches can handle it.

v. How to Run a Practice 1-1 ½ hours

In this division, the key is to keep players busy, interested and having fun during practice! Running “stations” is a good way to accomplish this. There are six basic stations you can use: Warm Up, Baserunning, Throwing, Fielding, Hitting and End of Practice. Three of them (Warm Up, Baserunning and Competitions/Fun) can be used at every practice. You can add one or two of the others (Throwing, Fielding, Hitting). Use 4 or 5 stations per practice and mix up the drills each time to keep things new and fun. Tips: grab some tennis balls to use for some practices drills, especially early in the season.

1. Warmup (5 mins) - Have the kids do a quick dynamic-type of warmup instead of your basic stretching. Its good for the kid to know how important a warmup

routine is, but its not necessary to spend a ton of time on it at this age. Start with a jog around the bases, then have them do some aerobic exercises like “butt-kickers”, “high knees” and shuffles (karaoke). Finish by doing some forward and backward arm circles and “windmills” to warm up the arms.

2. Baserunning (10 mins)- You can do this as a team and recommend that this station is always 1st to get the kids moving! Drills to consider:
 - a. Running out a ground ball: straight line to the bag, don't watch the ball, hit the closest side of the base, “breakdown”/stop after they hit the bag. Time them for fun!
 - b. Double and Triple: use “banana turn” at first base to get the best turn and straight line into 2nd base. Place a bucket in foul territory for something they can run around on their way to first and rounding the bag.
 - c. Homerun: Kids love to see how fast they can run! Time them for fun or make it into a relay race with half of the team starting at 2nd base.
 - d. Want to run some more? Have kids practice running on and off the field, to and from different positions in the field and where you want them on the bench. Time them!
3. Throwing (10-15 mins)- Recommend having kids throw to coaches and not to each other for drills, especially early on in the season. Split into 3 lines of four or 4 lines of three, each with a coach. Give each player a baseball.
 - a. 1st set of reps: “Spin” baseball to coach
 - i. Start with kids on one knee (glove knee up) and facing the coach. Have them bend throwing arm up 90 degrees and rest elbow on raised glove. Flip the ball using wrist, like throwing darts. Look for 6 to 12 rotation (backspin)
 - b. 2nd set of reps: Stationary Throw
 - i. Glove shoulder pointed towards target. Rt foot behind left (right hander). Rt ankle bone points to where throw will go. Feet shoulder length apart.
 - ii. Hands together, arms circle up (thumbs down) to a “T” position, Point baseball backwards (towards center field)
 - iii. Small step with left foot towards target and throw baseball overhand to coach. Follow through with right foot. Make sure throwing elbow is above shoulder on all throws.
 - c. 3rd set of reps: Step and throw (with a shuffle)
 - i. Can break down into 1, 2, 3 (shuffle, T position, throw)
 - d. With any of these drills, ask the players to hit your glove on the throw. Towards the end, play “knockout” (hitting target) or play a game up to 10 points
 - i. 3 points for a throw right to the glove
 - ii. 2 for catchable throw
4. Fielding (10-15 mins)

- a. Ground Balls
 - i. Practice getting into “baseball ready” position. Key to get in position –“Right, Left, sit”. Ready position means knees bent (athletic), butts down (sit on a bucket), head up and hands out ready to field.
 - ii. Drill: Split into 3 lines of four or 4 lines of three, each with a coach. Give each player a baseball. Have kids take turns getting “baseball ready” and fielding a rolled ground ball. Be sure players approach the ball, “sit” with head up and field the baseball out in front of their bodies with two hands (alligator hands). Have the kids make the throw back to a coach. After a few practices, throw to a coach or player (good catcher) standing at 1B.
 - iii. Play a game...two points for a clean catch, 1 point for a clean throw.
 - e. Pop Ups- note: consider using tennis balls, especially early on.
 - i. Practice getting into “baseball ready” position
 - ii. Proper position to catch fly ball = ball above shoulder level and in front of body; Arms/hands away from body, hands thumb to thumb
 - iii. Drill: Split into 3 lines of four or 4 lines of three, each with a coach. Give each player a baseball. Have kids take turns getting “baseball ready” and fielding a thrown pop up with two hands. After the kids receive the ball, have them throw it to a coach.
 - iv. Drill: football drill. Have kids go out for a short pass (post or crossing pattern) to learn to catch on the run.
 - v. Fun drill: Practice diving. Kids love to get dirty! Kids kneel on both knees and coach tosses ball to either side or short of the player. Player reaches out, catches ball and falls in that direction.
5. Hitting (15-20 mins)-
- a. General swing mechanics
 - i. Bat in fingers (as much as possible with small hands...not in death grip deep in hands)
 - ii. 2 pointer fingers should be able to point out in same direction
 - iii. Step into ball and leave bat back (create separation.)
 - iv. RELAX in the box and minimize excess movement, feet in straight line
 - v. Athletic and comfortable stance
 - 1. Knees flexed, should look ready to defend in basketball or a wide receiver in football
 - 2. Head should ALWAYS stay between 2 feet throughout the swing
 - a. Break into four teams of 3. Two teams will use tees and two will use a different part of the field for soft toss from a coach.

- b. For the tee group, one team of three will hit and one team of three will field the balls. Each kid takes 4 or 5 swings off the tee, then teams switch offense and defense.
 - i. Tee should always be in front of plate/in front of player's front foot on load
 - ii. Tee height is anywhere from belly button to waist
- c. For the soft toss group, same rotation
 - vi. Soft toss to kids from side
 - 1. Throw from a 45 degree angle in front of hitter
 - 2. Throw to hitters front hip
 - 3. Look for balance and getting sweet spot on the ball
- d. After both teams in both groups have hit, alternate tees and soft toss teams.
- e. Other Tee Drills
 - i. Belly Button Drill
 - 1. No stride, wider stance
 - 2. 2 dry swings (stop just before contact with ball)
 - 3. On 3rd swing, swing through with full swing
 - ii. Tee Drill: Balance Drill
 - 1. Start in balanced position with one leg up, knee as high as hip.
 - 2. Count 1, 2 and on three stride and swing.
- 6. Competitions/games (15-20 mins)- always finish practice with a fun game!
 - a. Kick ball. Yes, kick ball! Early on this can establish the concepts of the game easier for some (offense, defense, baserunning, etc).
 - b. Scrimmage (Tee or Coach Pitch)
 - i. 3 teams of 4.
 - ii. One team batting, one team in the infield, one in the outfield.
 - iii. Rotate after 2 or 3 outs.
 - c. Whiffle Ball Game
 - d. 4-man relay
 - i. 3 teams of 4. Each team lined up with about 20 feet between players. Spread line out for safety.
 - ii. One end of the line begins with the baseball. Players must throw the ball down the line to the next player, and go down and up the line to see who finishes first. If you drop or miss the ball, you have to go back to the player who threw it.
 - e. 4-cone races
 - i. Set up 4 cones in a box
 - ii. Players run to first cone, shuffle to 2nd, back pedal the 3rd and shuffle back to 4th. Set up 2 boxes and have team races.
 - f. Pickle (use tennis balls)

- g. Knockout – one swing and hitting it hard off the tee; fielding ground balls; fielding pop ups.
- h. Base running relays/races

Reminders

1. Keep all feedback positive.
2. Keep practice fun!
3. This is just an example, be creative and sometimes create your own plan!

vi. Game Format

1. Have your players arrive 15 minutes early to warm up with stretches, sprints, throwing, etc.
2. Decide which team will bat first. Coin flip, rock/paper/scissors, etc. with the opposing manager/coach.
3. The team batting first will bat all of its players before switching sides.
4. Defensive players will switch positions on occasion to allow everyone to play in different parts of the field (after every 5 batters or so, shift kids around).
5. (We did not have catcher gear or use catchers in 2021). Keep the catcher the same player for the whole inning if you are dressing the catcher in the mask and gear. You don't want to keep switching gear. The catcher's gear is for entertainment value only. You can find the catcher's gear in the Joboxes. Catchers should stand far away from the batter. It is not required that you have a catcher. Only do so if your players express interest.
6. If a player is "out," have the player leave the bases. However, the fielding team does not switch after three outs. All batters must bat each inning.
7. Games last one hour or as close to that without going over. Try to ensure that each team gets equal turns to bat.
8. (Optional) If you have ten minutes left, do not start a new inning. Try the following team relay race: have one team start at second base and the other team start at home plate. One at a time, each player circles the bases. The next player starts when the previous player returns. The first team to get all of its players back and seated "wins."
9. Please vacate the field with five minutes to go so that the next round of games can begin on time. Post-game handshakes to promote sportsmanship are always encouraged.
10. Bases should be placed at 60 feet. Use your throw-down bases if the bases are not on the field already.

11. For the first two weekends, the players will be hitting off of the tee. This is always good practice.
12. After the first two weekends, you can try employing coach pitch (soft toss from 8-10 ft). A coach will toss to the players on his/her own team. If the player can hit the pitch, great. If the player is not successful after three swings, bring the tee out so that player can be successful.
13. If you are scheduled to start at 1:00 PM but softball has not finished playing, please do not wait for them to finish. Move to the closest available empty field. Our time is limited.
14. It is very likely that the Joboxes will be open and that the bases will already be on the field on Saturdays. You will not have to put the bases away on Saturdays as our Instructional League begins play at 3:00 PM following our Training League games. In 2023, I always arrive a few minutes early and put down our own bases and tee so we were ready to go on time).
15. There is no softball on Sunday, so you will need your key to get into the Jobox (if needed. Again, I always carried our own bases and gear).
16. Extra batting helmets and catcher's gear will be in the Joboxes at Fields 2 and 4 (TBD). There are only two sets of catcher's gear. First come, first served, but please try to be fair (if catchers gear is utilized).
17. After the 2:00 PM games, please make sure that the extra batting helmets and catcher's gear are put back into the bags and placed in the Joboxes (If used).

vii. Dealing with Rain

1. If there is a lot of rain, the town will make a decision to close the fields. You cannot play or practice if the fields are closed. Brendon will communicate this to all of the coaches via email.
2. If it is raining and the town does not close the fields, it is your call whether or not to practice. Practices may be rescheduled to another weekday if you would still like to practice. Coordinate with Brendon, but even better, coordinate with other coaches and teams for make-up games. On a few occasions last year we added a couple games in place of practices. We simply coordinated with another team and used one of our practice times/locations for the game. This was a great way to make up games that may have been rained-out. Communicate early and often with the other coaches!
3. If it is raining and the town does not close the fields, Brendon will make the decision for game days. Due to limited field availability, games that are rained out will not be made up at Sterling Field, but they can be made up during a weeknight practice if you

would like to coordinate with your opposing manager. These make-up games will be played at a school field, and this is certainly not required.

viii. Field Care

1. Please do not practice on a wet/muddy field, as this tends to ruin the grass and playing surfaces.
2. Post-game field maintenance (raking, dragging, etc.) is not necessary at any of the fields at Sterling. Leave the bases (unless you used your throw-down bases) and playing surfaces as they are.
3. When practicing on school fields, you will typically just be in a grassy area. Use your throw-down bases. Again, no field work is necessary.