

Practice Guidance for GBSA Baseball Coaches

GBSA's mission is to provide kids with a fun, inclusive, and supportive environment where every child, regardless of skill level, can learn how to play baseball and softball and be a part of a team. Practices are critical to this mission. Players should know that practice is important and regular attendance is necessary to improve, but also that to succeed at baseball they should be working in between practices.

Keys to a Successful Practice

- Proper warmups. Jogging, stretching, high knee jumps – anything to get their bodies ready to play. Some quick sprints in a race form will get the kids pushing themselves a bit.
- Throwing and catching, throwing and catching, throwing and catching.
 - o Throwing and catching are critical to the game, yet we often don't do it with intention. Have players in two lines and throw with attention to proper form and catching with two hands (clamshell). Start close together (10 feet or so) and take a few steps back every few throws. Players should adjust and throw from their legs more as they increase distance.
- Work in stations.
 - o An easy way to make practice unfun is to have all players in the field waiting for a batter to hit a ball to them, watching pitch after pitch go by. Avoid full scrimmage situations. Instead, set up workstations and rotate the kids through. Some possibilities include: 1. Pitching/catching (bullpen station), 2. Pop flies with throw, 3. Grounders with throws, 4. Baserunning, 5. Hitting/bunting.
 - o Note: Stations require coaching support. You'll need a few individuals to run stations. Coaches are encouraged to collaborate with one another as well.
- Keep the kids moving.
 - o Instead of having players in one line for drills, have them run somewhere after making that play (e.g., player fields grounder at shortstop then runs behind base to join line at 2B, keep moving players between positions). Minimize time spent waiting for turns.
- When possible, gamify.
 - o Kids respond well to games. Competitions can get the kids excited to practice (e.g., players stay in until they drop a catchable fly ball; throwing at a target after fielding grounders, award points for good throws; relay races on the bases; bunting challenges, etc.). Games should be approached as *fun*, and should not create negative energy within the team
- Use batting cages for batting.
 - o It is very hard to teach kids to bat at full team practices—not impossible, but each kid really needs focused time with their coaches to improve their batting. Coaches should communicate to parents what each kid should be working on. Grandview has two batting cages. Heavy balls can be helpful, too.

We are here to support our coaches. Please reach out if you'd like to talk through your plans.