



COACH

8 Helpful Tips for New Little League® Coaches



You stepped up, and volunteered to coach a Little League® team. First, thank you! Without committed volunteers like you, local leagues would not be able to provide kids with the opportunity to have fun with their friends, and play the game they love. Second, if you have little experience in running a youth baseball or softball team, we're sure you have questions. Below are some simple, yet helpful tips to make sure you understand your [role as a manager/coach](#), as well as ideas that will ensure your coaching experience is the best possible for you and your Little Leaguers®.

Rulebooks

To be a successful Little League coach, you must learn the rules and regulations of the game. Little League makes available Rulebooks for each league for Little League Baseball®, Little League Softball®, and Little League Challenger Division®. Reach out

to your Board of Directors to make sure you have a copy. We highly suggest not only reviewing the Rulebook before the season, but throughout, as well. Rulebooks clearly inform coaches of the official regulations and playing rules, which will help you manage your team. From [pitch count regulations](#) to mandatory play to definition of terms to safety procedures, Little League Rulebooks provide you what you need to know.

Print versions of the Rulebooks are available through the [Little League Online Store](#) for \$7. Local Little League programs using their League ID number can purchase hard copy Rulebooks for \$2. Rulebooks are also available through the Apple, Amazon, and Barnes and Noble bookstores. The eBook format, optimized for use on all mobile devices, features each program's complete rules, along with search functionality for \$4.99 per book.

Important rule and regulation updates, as well as information about how to purchase rulebooks is available at LittleLeague.org/Rules.

Player Tryouts

Leagues differ with respect to how they operate player tryouts. No matter what the procedure, however, it's good practice to carefully study each player, and monitor his or her skillsets. Does the Little Leaguer catch pop-ups well? If so, you could be looking at one of your outfielders. Does the Little Leaguer field ground cleanly? If so, you may have found your shortstop. If there's a running exercise at the tryout, and a boy or girl shows impressive speed, he or she could be your lead-off hitter.

Make sure you [know your league's player selection method](#), as well, to be prepared to build your team.

Practice Plans

When your team is formed and the season nears, it's important to put together practice plans for each practice. Keep in mind, Little League is a developmental

program. Be sure to structure each practice to include fundamentals – proper hitting, fielding, base running, etc. Try to structure your practices with little down time in order to keep the players' attention. And, be sure to have fun and allow for plenty of water breaks. For those volunteering at the [Tee Ball](#) or [Coach Pitch Baseball](#) levels, Little League has created easy-to-implement curriculums that volunteers can use for free, which are found on [Little League University](#), Little League's free, online training and education platform.

Parents Meeting

After the first week of practice, schedule a meeting with your team's parents to better introduce yourself, explain your coaching philosophy, and to share your goals for the team. Be sure to explain that Little League is not a win-at-all-costs program, and that your responsibility is to develop players and for those players to have fun. Also, mention that if there are any concerns during the season to address those with you directly. At the meeting, it's a good opportunity to remind parents that their role is to show their support from the stands, and to let the coaches coach the team. Alert parents as to your preferred means of communication – phone, text, email. Be clear that you'd appreciate knowing if a player cannot attend a game/practice well ahead of time, and communicate the importance of Little Leaguers making as many practices as possible in order to develop and build team camaraderie. Remind parents to provide timely pick-ups after each practice and game, and encourage them to volunteer for a position within the league.

Ask Questions

As your first game approaches, reach out to Board members and fellow coaches to answer any questions you may have. You've probably been so focused on practicing and developing your players that you may not have thought about how to fill out and submit a lineup card, what team takes batting practice and when, who's best to handle the scorebook, when to clear the field when a storm is approaching, and is the home or visiting team responsible for field prep before the game or tidying up post-game. And, be sure to regularly visit [Little League University](#).

Team Rules for Games

It's good practice to put team rules in writing for players and parents. Be sure to list all important subjects so everyone is on the same page. Explain what time you want players at the field pre-game, proper uniform appearance (jerseys tucked in), your philosophy about food in the dugout, and the importance of sportsmanship toward umpires, opposing players, and teammates.

Games

Remember to have fun! Do not get overly caught-up in winning or losing. Your main responsibility is to provide an environment and level of instruction that will develop your Little Leaguers not just on the field, but off the field as well. Recognize solid play, and critique mistakes in a supportive way, while offering ideas on how to improve. Little League has partnered with [Positive Coaching Alliance](#) (PCA) to provide a framework and tools for local Little League volunteers to develop a culture of positive, character-building competition. Use the PCA information to create a nurturing environment where Little Leaguers can thrive in, learn, and have fun!

Once again, thank you for volunteering to coach! You've taken the first step in providing kids in your community an opportunity to build memories that will last a lifetime.