

# How To Hold Your First Practice

OK, so now you're the coach! What do I do now?

Hey, it's not so bad; just think you get to spend all this time with your daughter. Coaching can be overwhelming.

Just like in school let's take this in chunks.

## Getting Started:

Number one mistake is contacting your players before you have all the basic information needed, so what is that information.

**Practices – when and where.** Find out what fields are available to you and book some time. City of Richfield assigns fields to different organizations. So you will be limited. Just because you live next to field A doesn't necessarily mean you have access to that field.

*Your league director will have that information for you.*

RGSA recommends that each team holds at least one practice each week; this does not include your weekly games.

**Helpful Hint:** Most teams practice twice a week until the season starts. Lets say for example you play on Tuesdays. Start your first practice on Tuesday and Sunday's, then when the season starts you'll be playing on Tuesday and keep Sunday as your practice day.

Pick days that work for you, remember you have a lot going on, you'll never accommodate everyone.

## Games – Find out

1. The night you play?
2. What fields you play on?
3. What times you play?

*League directors may or may not have the full schedule ready during equipment distribution. They should at least know what nights you'll be playing.*

**Coaches information** – you should have your personal and contact information including assistants information as handouts to the parents, this should include;

1. Name
2. Phone number
3. Cell phone number
4. Email address

**Hint:** if you have email access this can be the most efficient way to communicate to players and parents. It's not unusual to have one email address for both parents and one for the player. Never send something to a player and not the parent or vice versa.

All this and you haven't even contacted your players...

### **Check list:**

1. Field reservations, time and dates
2. Season game schedule
3. Practice schedule
4. Equipment
5. Coaches information

OK let's contact our players and schedule a **TEAM MEETING** with practice to follow.

Younger players – contact the parent  
Older players – contact the player

**Helpful Hint:** Make it mandatory that at least one of the parent attends the **TEAM MEETING**

This will be the most important meeting of your coaching career.

**Team Equipment** – For most of you your equipment will be distributed to you during team draft or at the coach's clinic.

You will receive:

Appropriate sized bats for your league

Helmets

Catcher's helmet and chest protector

Soft practice ball

Hard practice balls

Playing balls – upper leagues

First aid kits

One batting tee – lower leagues

Jersey – May be distributed just before season starts

Visor or cap - May be distributed just before season starts

**League Rules** – RGSAA has general rules but each league has rules specific to you.

For example: the older girls do not have a 5 run a inning limit.

*Your league director will have a copy of these rules for you. Please understand them, if not please ask questions.*

Full league rules can be found at our web site

[www.richtfieldgirlssoftball.org](http://www.richtfieldgirlssoftball.org) Under documents

**Team Roster** – *Your league director will deliver your roster to you. Information should include:*

1. Player's name

2. Parent's name

3. Phone number

4. Cell phone number

5. E-mail address

6. Health issues such as asthma ect

Introduce yourself; tell them a little about how you got involved and that YOU are there daughters coach.

Recruit team parents and assistants at this meeting.

Example: This is a recreational softball program and we are here have some fun but I will need some help with a few things:

I need someone to help with practice.

I need someone to help with equipment

I need someone to help with score book

I need someone to help with treat schedule

I need someone to help with roster and game schedule

Who can help?

Write everything down. Who's doing what.

OK done with that, lets get started with practice:

Sit and introduce yourself and have the kids do the same.

Ask them their favorite sport or activity

Ask them if they are right handed or left handed

Tell them what you expect from them.

**Example:** Our goal is to make sure everyone understands how to hit, throw and run the bases..... Look around, we are all on the same team and what you do and how you act affects everyone here. I expect you to work hard and have some fun.

## **Start your practice.**

Some say there are five steps to a good practice:

1. Communicate what you will be working on today
2. Same warm-up every practice
3. Breakup into stations
4. Come together for a team drill
5. Final words

## **5 WAYS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR PLAYERS**

Stacie Mahoe

Successful coaching involves motivating athletes and providing instruction and information necessary for enhancing skills and improving performance. However, in order to motivate and guide athletes, a coach must be efficient in communicating with their athletes.

Effective, successful communication involves delivering messages in a way that athletes not only hear them, but understand and accept them as well. So what can you, as a coach, do to ensure that your messages are being heard and understood by your players? Here are five things that will help you communicate more effectively with your team.

### **Start with a plan – Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How**

Take a look at WHO you wish to communicate with. Is it the whole team? Just the infield? Just the outfield? Just the substitute players?

WHAT exactly is it that you want to communicate? What is your message? Is it a rule? An instruction? A tip? Or maybe even a team problem that you want to work out with your players?

WHEN and WHERE will this message best be delivered? Before practice? During practice? After practice? After a game? Pre-game?

WHY you want to communicate this message. Why is this message important? How will it help your team? Think about this so that you can share it with your athletes. It may help “hit home” a little more if they understand why you are sending them this message.

And last, but not least, HOW are you going to communicate the information? Will you use props, pictures, articles, or other tools to help illustrate your point? Are you going to type the information out so that your players can see it as they listen to you talk about it?

### **Access the Situation**

As you are delivering your message, consider the following:

- Do I have the player's undivided attention?
- Am I explaining myself in an easily understood manner?
- Do my players understand what I'm saying?
- Do the players believe what I am telling them and accept the message?

## Use the 6 Elements of Effective Communication

- Clear Presented the message clearly
- Concise Less is more. Be concise. Do not lose the message by being long winded
- Correct Be accurate, avoid giving misleading information
- Complete Give all the information, not just part of it
- Courteous Be polite and non-threatening, avoid conflict
- Constructive Be positive, avoid being critical and negative

## Be Positive

When coaches instruct athletes it is important that they provide information in a positive manner. Look for something positive to say first and then provide the information that will help the athlete improve his/her skills.

## Develop Your Communication Skills

- Develop your verbal and non-verbal communication skills (i.e. eye contact and posture)
- Provide positive feedback during coaching sessions
- Give all athletes equal attention
- Communicate as appropriate to your athlete's thinking and learning styles
- Don't only talk to your athletes, but listen to them as well

Communicating more effectively with your players helps increase overall performance. Be clear, convincing, and understandable. If they don't understand you, you can't help them. If they don't believe you, they won't listen. Remember something I learned from Peter Sprenkle: your players don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Effective communication doesn't only apply to instruction. Find a way to show them, communicate to them, how much you care too

## TALKING WITH YOUR PLAYERS

Pete Sprenkle

*Author of A Softball Coaches Tool Kit*

**1. Tell your players what you want them to do.**  
In clear behavioral terms, easy to understand. (Use a crow hop when you throw)  
Tell them what to do up front, rather than correcting mistakes.  
Tell them what to do. Do not tell them what NOT to do.  
**YES:** Hit the low pitch. **NO:** Stay off the high pitch.

**2. Criticize the performance, not the performer.**

(Hate the sin, love the sinner.)

AND, always end with a positive statement/self talk.

**YES:** That throw was behind the runner. Next time throw ahead of the runner. With your great arm we'll get the out.  
**NO:** You threw to the wrong base.

**YES:** On bunt defense the 2B always covers 1st base. With your speed you should be in good shape to take the throw.  
**NO:** You messed up that play.

**3. Don't assume they've learned it; repeat it.**

Repetition is fundamental to learning, especially complex tasks.

Rule of three - if you've explained it three times and it isn't getting through, try a different approach.

**Example:** If I've told you once, I've told you 1,000 times - who is the slow learner here?

Listen, see, do. (Tell them, show them, have them do it.)

**4. What you say to your players is what matters.**

What you say vs. what they hear - have listener repeat back to you what you said.

Get positive reinforcement into their heads.

**Example:** A player says "I can't bunt."

**YES:** Break skill down into small elements, do one piece successfully; get the player to say something positive about performance. "I was able to square around properly."

**NO:** "Sure you can, just keep trying."

**Never:** Stop trying! **Always:** Expect excellence of yourself!

**5. Bring a constant, consistent positive message.**  
Your players don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.  
You never exceed your own expectations.  
Say it, write it, look it, listen, teach it, define it ... But keep it positive.  
The ones who really love us are the ones who demand the most from us.

If you coach or play baseball then you want to make a print this email and refer to it for the next few days. For the past week I had a bad case of strep throat. I could not eat whole foods and had trouble talking. It got me thinking about language.

The language we use on the field, in our minds and to our players / teammates. Over the next few days I would like you to keep track of how many times you use these words/phrases

- Can't - Don't lose him
- Don't - Don't get behind
- Won't - Don't let him beat you - Shouldn't
- Mistake
- Error
- Wrong
- Be tough
- Speed up
- Won't - Those walks will kill you

You will be amazed at how many times you use negative words. On Friday I will give you replacement phrases for all of these negative words / phrases.

Remember...you can make excuses or you can make it happen ...you can't do both

## Paul Reddick

Coach, here are a few words/phrases that we can start with to replace neg. words. Plus 2 great emails from coaches (below)

- afraid – uncomfortable
- failure - minor set back
- can't - I need to change my approach
- nervous - anxiously awaiting
- hate - prefer something else
- not bad - pretty good
- confused - need more info
- mad - - passionate
- be quick - your fast
- mistake - need improvement
- stupid - learning
- overwhelmed - maximized
- scared - excited
- get tough - your tough

Paul, You are right on! I remember when I found out the hard way. While as an assistant coach at Cochise Community College I always heard the head coach yell to the pitchers after 2 outs and then a couple ball calls, "No 2 out walks!"

A couple of years later I was on the University of Arizona staff and we were playing Stanford. One of our pitchers was in the same boat and I yelled "No 2 out walks!" "No sooner had I said that the legendary pitching coach Jim Wing got in my ear and told me to "Never say that again!" "All you are doing is making him focus on the negative, and if you say don't he will do the don't!!" Sure enough ball 4. I have never since told any player or student to "don't" something and concentrated on the to "do".

## Bobby Roan, Fox Valley Baseball Academy, YMCA Baseball

Great concept. I definitely agree with your concern about leaving players with negative mind sets.

However, I don't agree that "speed up" or "be tough" are necessarily negative. They are better than, "you're slow" or "your not being tough enough".

Each of the two statements actually tells the player what the coach wants from him. As long as it is within the kid's ability to speed up or be tougher, I don't necessarily see these two statements as negative at all.

On a personal note. I once had my college coach come out to the mound when I was struggling with control and had walked 2 batters. His sage advice was actually positive. He didn't say, "Don't walk this guy." Instead he said, "Comon, I need you to throw strikes."

Maybe because he said this in front of my entire infield and catcher, I responded, "What the hell do you think I've been trying to do?" **Bill Gaito**

A Practice Plan for a Tee Ball team. This plan would be good for the middle of the season when the players are beginning to get a good grasp on the fundamentals and how a game goes. Middle of the season

### TEE BALL PRACTICE PLAN

Missing:

Activity	Time	Specifics and Objectives
WARM-UP	5	Run, Self Toss
TEACH	5	Game review (examples of points to cover)
		Ball hit between 1B and 2B, how to handle
		Run when the ball is hit, watch your coaches
		Explain stations 1 & 2
		Throwing and catching (stations 5 & 6)
STATIONS	18	Six Stations - six minutes per station (3)
		Practice and develop skills
CONTEST	5	Toss Around (need stop watch)
		Six Stations - six minutes per station (3)
		Practice and develop skills
CONTEST	5	Throwing @ Buckets
LESSON	5	Words for the Day
		The farther you reach, the farther you will go

# CRISS CROSS DRILL

Pete Sprenkle

*Author of A Softball Coaches Tool Kit*

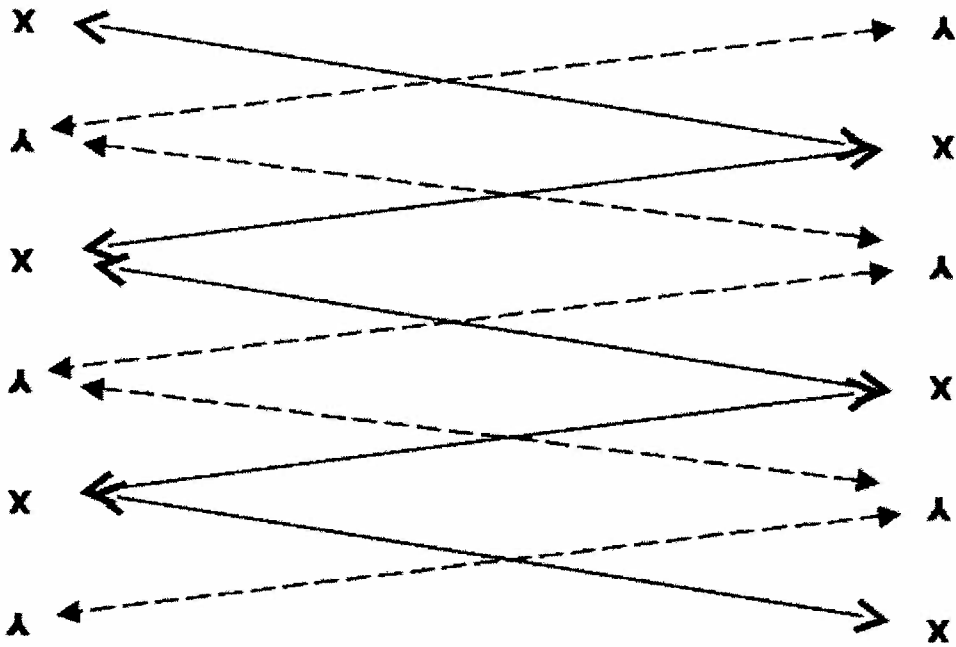
Divide players into two teams ... X and Y. Team X competes against Team Y.

The ball is thrown criss-cross down the line to every other player. Then the ball is returned back to the same partner.

The winning team is the one which gets the ball back to the start first.

Alternate by throwing short hops or increasing the distance between players and/or the throwing distance.

Another alternative is to use one ball and throw the ball to anyone in the opposite line except the player that threw the ball to you.





Good internet links

YouTube\

Softball drills

Game Winning Baseball and softball Drills

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VRM-462x\\_A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VRM-462x_A)

<http://www.baseball-softballdrills.com/>

<http://www.softball-tips.com/instruction/>

<http://balltips.homestead.com/FrontPage.html>

<http://www.amug.org/~nellis/sb.dhs.drills.html>

**XI. Parent/Volunteer Participation**

This policy outlines the expectations of the team parent and league volunteer.

**Parent**

- Since the league is made up of volunteers, parents' cooperation and participation is not only encouraged, but also expected.
- Parents are responsible for all uniforms and equipment given to their child by the league. At the end of the season, the parent will be responsible for paying the cost of the items not returned.
- Parents are also encouraged to volunteer for committee work.
- Parents are responsible for seeing that their child is at the field of practice five minutes before practice begins and to pick up their child when practice ends.
- Parents are responsible to have their child at the field of play for scheduled games at least fifteen minutes before game time.
- Any complaints to the league should be made in writing to the Secretary. These complaints will be reviewed and answered to the parent within seven days. If the complaint is serious enough, a special meeting will be held by the board of directors and the results reported to the parents.

**Volunteers**

- As with many community based, non-profit organizations, RGSA has been, and will continue to be, successful because of a seemingly endless amount of energy from a few members. Many very talented individuals have stepped forward with good ideas and lots of enthusiasm.
- As a volunteer, **YOU** are not expected to become committed to softball for the entire summer. Most of the work to be done is completed well before the softball season begins. If **YOU** can organize, **YOU** are needed.
- If **YOU** want to become involved in a community youth program, RGSA needs **YOU**. No matter how seemingly small **YOUR** contribution may be, **YOUR** involvement makes **YOUR** association stronger and better.
- Through **YOUR** involvement about 300 youths of our community will experience a positive softball childhood experience. As a community, we must continue to implement and strengthen avenues for youth involvement.
- Tell us what area interests **YOU**, and the association will do everything possible to find a fit for **YOUR** talents. Only through **YOUR** involvement can this association claim to be a community-based organization.
- **How do you get involved?**
  - Come to the open board meetings held on the 1st Sunday of every month at the Oak Grove Lutheran Church.
  - Call a Coordinator, Director or Officer for more information.

## **XII. Coaches Responsibility**

This policy outlines the expectations of the coach

A coach is responsible for the development and conduct of all players on the team. A coach's primary function is to teach skills and develop the players socially, psychologically, and physically. Coaches are accountable to the RGSAA Board of

Directors and will follow the guidelines listed below:

1. Hold a parent/coach meeting prior to the first season game to explain the rules, goals, and objectives to the team.
2. Clearly state the expectations of the players and parents for the season.
3. Always be positive and use constructive criticism only!
4. Encourage team play and values rather than individual accomplishments.
5. Develop players to play a variety of positions within the player's physical and mental abilities.
6. Enforce all rules without prejudice toward any one player.
7. Maintain team discipline. These matters should be explained in full and be private between player, parent, and coach.
8. Support the RGSAA philosophy.
9. Conduct yourself as a role model for the players and the parents. Any complaint as to a coach's behavior and/or coaching philosophy will be reviewed by a committee made up of the RGSAA president, appropriate league director for the age group involved; also the Umpire Coordinator if needed.
10. This panel shall have final say as to what disciplinary action will be taken. Recourse to disciplinary action is to notify the appropriate softball Director the desire to appear before the board at the next regularly scheduled board meeting.

#### XIV. RGSА Harassment Policy

RGSА believes that every participant has the right to an environment free of unwelcome verbal or physical conduct, which harasses, disrupts, or interferes with the individual's performance or which creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile environment.

**Member Harassment** - Any unwelcome conduct directed toward a member that illegally discriminates against that member, unreasonably interferes with an individual's performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

**Sexual Harassment** - Any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a nature where:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly as term or condition of an individual's participation.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used or threatened to be as the basis for participation.
- Such conduct unreasonably interferes with an individual's performance or creates an intimidation, hostile, or offensive environment.

RGSА will not tolerate its members engaging in this type of behavior. Any member participating in such negative conduct will be subject to appropriate corrective action, which may include termination from all activities.