

OK, so now I'm the
coach!

What do I do now?

10 Helpful steps in getting your team to the
field and off to an enjoyable, positive
summer.

By Jeff Hawkinson

How To Hold Your First Practice?

Hey, it's not so bad; just think you get to spend all this time with your daughter or daughters.

Coaching can be overwhelming.

The more confidence you have the more relaxed you, the parents, and the players will feel.

Understand the system. Research your subject.

“Present” vs “Prepared” Don't just show up. Be prepared!
How prepared are you?

Secret - Girls play better when they're happy!!

Let's get Started:

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is contacting your players before you have all the basic information needed. So what IS that information?

#1 - 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. Let's say for example you play on Tuesdays. Start your first practice on Tuesday and have another on Sunday, then when the season starts you'll be playing on Tuesday and try to keep Sunday as your practice day.

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

#2 - 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.

#3 - 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 balls

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

4 - League Rules – UNDERSTAND THEM

RGSA 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 ask questions.

Full league rules can be found at our web site

www.richfieldgirlssoftball.org Under documents

#5 - Team Rosters

If not drafting, 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 etc.

This is confidential information. Please protect it.

#6 - 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 😊

#7 - Your Check list:

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

#8 – Schedule your first team meeting

OK let's contact our players and schedule a **TEAM MEETING** with practice to follow. This will be the most important meeting of your coaching career.

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**

Introduce yourself; tell them a little about how you got involved and that **YOU** are their daughters coach. Remember to stay positive and confident.

#9 - Recruit team parent and team assistants

Example: Say “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:

#10 – First Practice

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

Ask them there favorite sport or activity

Ask them if they are right handed or left handed

Tell them what you expect from them.

Example: Say something like “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. Have the same warm-up routine 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.

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, teach it But keep it positive.

The ones who really love us are the ones who demand the most from us.

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:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Specifics and Objectives</u>
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)
STATIONS	18	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](#)

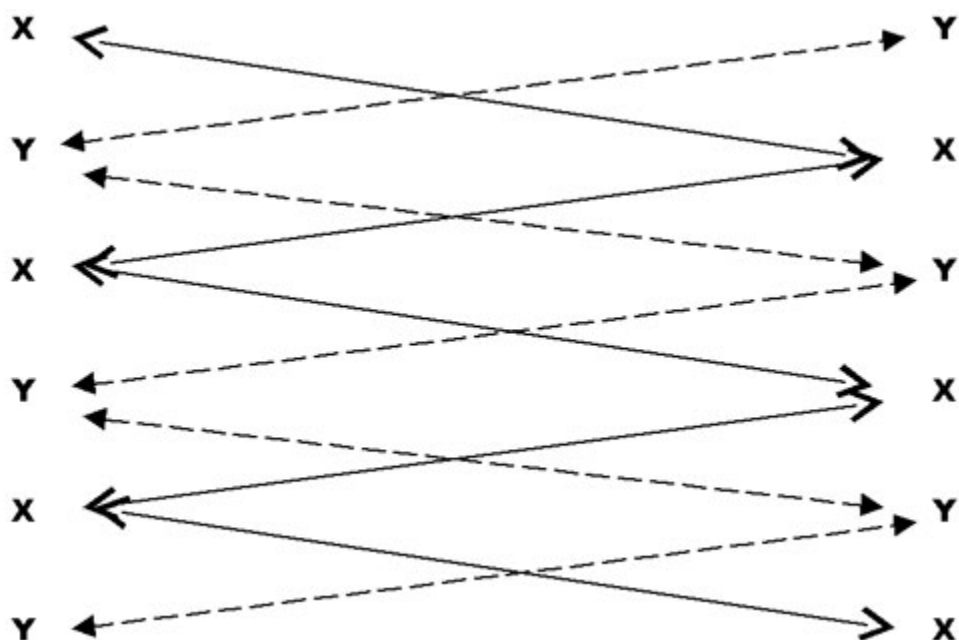
Divide players into two teams ... X and Y. Team X competes against Team Y.

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.



SPEED AND AGILITY TEST

Pete Sprengle

Author of [A Softball Coaches Tool Kit](#)

Coaches Note: This is a great way to measure the speed and agility of players. I have found it especially useful when conducting tryouts for traveling or high school teams.

E TEST

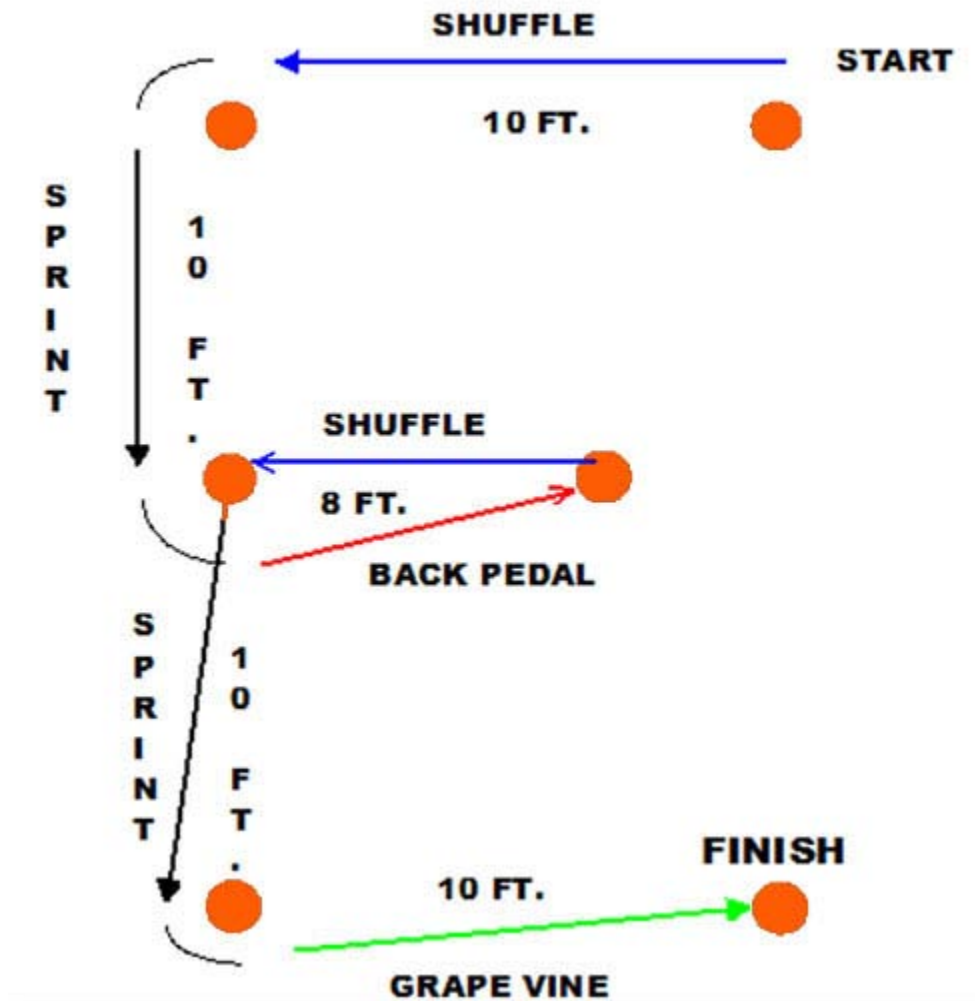
6 legs

Do two sets - no rest between

Time each player - make it competitive

Adjust distances for your facilities

● = Small Cones



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	- Error	- Wrong
- Won't - Don't get behind		- Mistake	- Be tough
- Don't	- Don't let him beat you-	Shouldn't	- 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 happenyou 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	mad - passionate
failure - minor set back	be quick - your fast
can't - I need to change my approach	mistake - need improvement
nervous - anxiously awaiting	stupid - learning
hate - prefer something else	overwhelmed - maximized
not bad - pretty good	scared - excited
confused - need more info	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, "C'mon, 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**

Good internet links

YouTube\

Softball drills

Game Winning Baseball and softball Drills

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>