

2024 Mountainside Softball Baseball League (MSBL) American League (1st & 2nd Graders) Program Overview

Eligibility

- Open to Mountainside children in 1st and 2nd grade.

League Overview

- The American League introduces young players to structured, fundamental baseball in a fun, instructional environment.
- Players will experience a mix of coach and player-pitched games and continue building upon the basics learned in T-ball, while being introduced to more formal gameplay.

Season Goals

- 1) Skill Progression
 - Reinforce and expand the fundamental skills of baseball, with increased focus on gameplay strategies like hitting live pitches, fielding ground balls, and catching pop-ups.
- 2) Teamwork and Strategy
 - Introduce players to teamwork within structured baseball games, emphasizing positioning and working as a team during play.
- 3) Enjoyment of the Game
 - While games are more structured and competitive than T-ball, fun remains the top priority. This helps foster a long-lasting love for the game.
- 4) Confidence Building
 - Encourage all players to feel confident in their abilities and decisions on the field, with positive reinforcement from coaches.

Roster Construction

- Each team will consist of approximately 10-11 players, but will ultimately be determined by number of registrants, volunteers, and field availability.
- Players should rotate positions to experience both infield and outfield roles safely, with attention paid to skill development at different positions.

Program Structure

Practice (One 90 min practice/week)

- Will focus on building skills through stations and drills, with increasing complexity as players develop:

Fielding

Technical:

- Emphasize proper fielding technique (glove foot forward, body in front of the ball). Introduce making throws to first base.

Drills:

- Ground ball fielding drills, with focus on accurate throws.
- Knockout-style games or target practice for accurate throws.

Hitting

Technical:

- Continue working on balanced stance, bat swing mechanics, and follow-through.

Drills:

- Practice hitting live coach-pitched balls.
- Gradual introduction of kid-pitched balls during drills.
- Use tee drills for struggling batters if necessary.

Baserunning

Technical:

- Teach players to read the play, run to the next base, and when to hold. Emphasize running through first base.

Drills:

- Relay races for speed and focus on base awareness.
- Timing drills and relay races can continue to reinforce base running.

Throwing and Catching

Technical:

- Focus on throwing with accuracy and catching fly balls using the “fingers up” technique. Introduce relay throws from the outfield.

Drills:

- Target throwing games to practice aim.
- Fly ball drills with increasing difficulty.

Gameplay (1 game/week)

- The American League games will introduce a blend of competition and instruction.
- The games will emphasize fair play and fun while teaching more complex elements of the sport.

Inning Structure:

- Games will consist of 6 innings or a 90-minute limit.
- The first 2 innings will feature coach pitching, while the remaining innings will be a hybrid of kid pitching and coach pitching as outlined in the league rules.

Batting Rules:

- All players will bat in a continuous lineup.
- No strikeouts or walks during coach-pitched innings, but outs are introduced in later innings when kid pitching occurs.

Fielding Rules:

- Rotate players through infield and outfield positions.
- Encourage players to make force outs at second base or first base.
- Players are not allowed to advance on overthrows to maintain simplicity and safety.

Baserunning:

- Players will advance base-to-base.
- Stealing is only allowed to 3rd base, and only during kid-pitched innings.
- Sliding is not permitted into first base but may be introduced at other bases.

Coaching Guidelines

Positive Reinforcement:

- Encourage effort and improvement.
- Always praise good sportsmanship and attempts, regardless of the outcome.

Patience and Fun

- Kids at this age are still learning basic game concepts. Keep the atmosphere light and fun while being patient as they develop.

Safety First

- Ensure that players understand the importance of paying attention during gameplay, especially during pitching and batting.
- Helmets should be always worn while batting or running bases.

Parental Involvement

- Encourage parents to practice with their children outside of scheduled practices and games.
- Regular communication with parents regarding skill development is key.