



at Home!

PROGRAM MANUAL

A program of the

National
ALLIANCE
For Youth Sports



Thank You for Choosing to Start Smart Baseball at Home!

The National Alliance for Youth Sports has taken the successful Start Smart Baseball Program, traditionally conducted by youth service agencies such as recreation departments, YMCAs and Boys and Girls Clubs, and has modified it so that you can set your own schedule, spend quality one-on-one time with your child and complete the program from the convenience of your own home. This manual will be your guide to developing the necessary skills for your child to have fun and be successful in sports for years to come.



MANUAL CONTENTS



Section 1 – Introduction

What are the Start Smart Sports Development Programs?	Page 1
The Start Smart Mission	Page 1
Who is the National Alliance for Youth Sports?	Page 1
References	Page 2
What About the Products?	Page 2

Section 2 – The Start Smart Parent

What are Your Responsibilities	Page 3
Materials Checklist	Page 3
Additional Materials You May Need	Page 3
Program Guidelines	Page 4

Section 3 – Program Format

Sample Schedule	Page 5
Pre-program: Parent Information and Preparation	Page 5
Week 1: Sports Readiness Pre-Test and Exercise #1	Page 6
Week 2-6: Skill Development Sessions	Page 7

Section 4 – Readiness Test

Readiness Test Introduction	Page 8
Throwing Test	Page 9
Catching Test	Page 10
Batting Test	Page 11
Running/Agility Test	Page 12
Parent Pre-Test	Page 13
Parent Pre-Test Answer Key	Page 14
Interpreting the Test Scores	Page 15

Section 5 – Skill Development Exercises

Skill Development Exercises and Set-up, Weeks 1-6	Page 16
---	---------

Section 6 – Performance Cues

Page 27



at Home!

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

What are the Start Smart Sports Development Programs?

The Start Smart Sports Development Programs, developed by the National Alliance for Youth Sports, teach children the basic motor skills necessary to play organized sports while they work one-on-one and spend quality time with their parents. The program focuses on teaching children and their parents basic sports mechanics without the threat of competition or the fear of getting hurt. The skill development exercises become increasingly more difficult as the program progresses and your child shows improvement. Start Smart consists of 6 different developmental programs (Baseball, Basketball, Football, Soccer, Golf and a General Skills Development Program).

The Start Smart Mission

The Start Smart Sports Development Programs were created to teach children the basic motor skills necessary to participate in organized sports while giving them the opportunity to work one-on-one with their parent. The programs were developed to be informative and fun, so children and parents will have a positive first time sports experience and continue participating in sports beyond this introductory level.

Who is the National Alliance for Youth Sports?

Formed in West Palm Beach, Florida in 1981 the "Alliance" was originally developed as a volunteer youth sport coaches certification system (NYSCA) with a simple mission: to make youth sports fun and safe for kids. Since 1981, the nonprofit association has developed into a diverse organization with a number of national programs and accredited chapters in all fifty states. The programs offered by the Alliance include: the National Youth Sports Coaches and Officials Association, the National Academy for Youth Sports Administrators, Parents Association for Youth Sports, the Start Smart Development Programs and Hook A Kid On Golf. These programs are administered by the Alliance's two divisions; Education and Youth Development.



at Home!

INTRODUCTION

While the Education division concentrates on programs that educate adults, the Youth Development division focuses on programs that deal directly with children. Specifically, the Youth Development division develops programs that build proficiency and confidence that youngsters need to participate and remain active in sports by 1) offering programs that teach the basic motor skills necessary for meaningful sports participation, 2) generating interest in lifetime activities and 3) providing a healthy fitness attitude for life.

References

The Start Smart Sports Development Program developmental tasks and program guidelines were developed by motor skills development specialists from Northern Kentucky University. The program is based on the research findings (Kirk, 1993), practices of effective motor development teachers and programs (Graham, Holt/Hale & Parker, 1993), and is influenced by the National Alliance for Sport and Physical Education's Council on Physical Education for Children's Positive Statement: "Developmentally appropriate physical education practices for children" (1991). And the following publications:

Graham, G.; Holt/Hale S.; & Parker, M. (1993). *Children Moving: A Reflective Approach to Teaching Physical Education* (3rd Ed.). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.

Kirk, M.F. (1993). *Youth Sports Readiness and Remediation Study; Unpublished research study; Northern Kentucky University.*

What About the Products?

The 1993 study at Northern Kentucky University showed that children ages 5-10 participating in a motor skills development program improved at a greater rate while using specialized equipment as opposed to traditional elementary physical education equipment. The products used in the Start Smart programs are the most innovative available and are developmentally appropriate for teaching youngsters the basic motor skills that are emphasized in the program. The Start Smart Sports Development Program works closely with Franklin Sporting Goods to produce developmentally appropriate products.



A Supplier of the Start Smart Sports Development Programs



at Home!

SECTION 2 – THE START SMART PARENT

What are Your Responsibilities?

As a Start Smart Parent, you are the key to the success of your at home program! You will be spending quality one-on-one time with your child, both during the Start Smart sessions and while practicing/reviewing the exercises between sessions. It is important to track your child's progress and to continually encourage your child while providing him/her with positive feedback. This will help build self-confidence in your child which will drive him/her to succeed.

It is very important to finish reviewing this Start Smart Manual prior to beginning your program. Also, as a Start Smart Parent, you will want to familiarize yourself with all of the equipment prior to conducting Start Smart Baseball at Home for the first time. Please see the list of additional materials below as you may want to add these items into your exercises. Finally, we always encourage our parents to send in pictures and feedback regarding their Start Smart experience. Please feel free to complete the Parent Survey (page A6) and return it to our National Office.

Materials Checklist

The following is a list of items that are included in the Start Smart Baseball at Home Kit. Please use this list to make sure you have received all the contents of your kit. If any of the materials are not included, contact the national office immediately at (800) 729-2057.

- **1-PARENT MANUAL**
- **1-KOOSH BALL**
- **1-BATTING TEE**
- **1-BAT AND BALL SET**
- **1-GLOVE**
- **4-CONES**
- **5-BALLOONS**

Additional Materials You May Need

The following is a list of materials that you need to run your Start Smart Baseball at Home Program. You most likely will already have some of these materials and most of them can be substituted by using other items.

- **Duct or masking tape** – This item is used to create lines for both your child to stand behind or marking a distance for your child to throw or hit a ball beyond while performing certain exercises. It also is used to mark a target on a wall for your child to aim at while throwing and/or hitting.
- **Rope or string** – You will need to tie the Koosh Ball to the string and hang it from the ceiling, a tree or a pole/rod in some of the exercises.



at Home!

THE START SMART PARENT

• **Hula hoop** - It is used to create a target on a wall for your child to aim at while throwing and/or hitting (string or masking tape may be used as well).

• **Plastic milk or soda containers** – These are used in the exercises that involve throwing for accuracy. These empty containers will be set-up as throwing targets for your child.

Program Guidelines

The following guidelines should be emphasized during your Start Smart Baseball at Home program to ensure that your child obtains high levels of achievement and success during the program.

Positive Learning Environment: Provide your child with a positive non-threatening learning environment where they receive a great deal of encouragement and success.

Children are Unique: All children are unique and learn at different rates. It will take your child a lot of time and effort to improve.

Maximum Involvement: Start Smart activities are organized so that your child is maximally involved.

Success is Important: Your child should experience high success rates on each task or it is probably too difficult and should be modified (i.e. changing the distance that a ball must travel).

Appropriate Equipment: The equipment must be developmentally appropriate for the child. Start Smart has provided you with equipment that is the appropriate size and weight for this age group.

Keep it simple: Your child is not a "little adult" and he/she learns and comprehends differently. In the early learning stages, keep it simple by demonstrating exactly what you want him/her to do.

Positive Feedback: Clear, concise, positive feedback from you regarding your child's performance and effort will enhance learning.

Expert Success: Your child needs a lot of encouragement and a feeling that your expectations are that they learn and improve. If you expect success, your child will have the confidence to believe that he/she is capable of succeeding in the particular task.

Complete Tasks Before Continuing: Start Smart activities are organized from simple to more complex. Your child should complete one task successfully before moving on to the next exercise.

Review Tasks: Your child will benefit from reviewing previously completed tasks. This practice is especially helpful if he/she is having difficulty with the next task.



SECTION 3 – PROGRAM FORMAT

at Home!

This section contains a standard schedule for Start Smart Baseball at Home, which is followed by the Readiness Test, Skill Development Exercises and the Performance Cues. Ideally, you will want to spread the 6 one-hour sessions out over a 6 week period. However, we know that most parents have very busy schedules, so feel free to set your own schedule that will allow you to dedicate at least one hour for each session.

Standard Start Smart Schedule

- PRE-PROGRAM:** *Parent Information and Preparation*
WEEK 1: *Sports Readiness Pre-test and Skill Development Exercises*
WEEKS 2-5: *Skill Development Exercises*
WEEK 6: *Skill Development Exercises and Post-test*

Parent Information and Preparation

The purpose of this section is to introduce you to the goals of Start Smart At Home and get you and your child off to a good start. We encourage you to go through all the points in this section prior to the start of your Start Smart Baseball At Home program.

1. Review the manual.

- Keep a log of your child's progress.
- Learn and use the Performance Cues for each skill.
- Follow the Program Guidelines in the manual.

2. Review the products that will be used in the program.

- Identify each of the products by name and familiarize yourself with the equipment.

3. Review the Skill Development Exercises listed in your manual and try them yourself.

- Activities each week progress from simple to more complex.
- Performance Cues (page 27) help simplify teaching your child.
- Distances can be altered to ensure success.
- Write notes in your manual.
- Keep the Program Guidelines in mind at all times.

4. Understand your role in Start Smart.

- Read through the Parent Test (page 14) and take it yourself. The purpose of this test is to aid you in understanding your role in youth sports and Start Smart.
- Using the answer key on page 15, review the Parent Test answers.

5. Please complete "The Sport In Me" workbook, with your child before your first scheduled Start Smart session.

PRE-PROGRAM



PROGRAM FORMAT

at Home!

Sports Readiness Pre-Test and Exercise #1

NOTE: Start Smart Baseball at Home program sessions should last approximately one hour. For this sample format, we are using 6-7 p.m. as our model.

5:45 pm - Set-Up for Pre-Test

- In this session, you will test your child in four different areas: Throwing, Catching, Batting, Running/Agility.
- Have your equipment ready for each skill test (page 9-12).
- Refer to the Performance Cues on page A1 for each skill to help simplify teaching your child.

6:00-6:10 pm - Explain Sports Readiness Test to your child

- Please keep in mind that this test is ONLY an evaluation for you to gauge the progress of your child.
- Please turn to the testing section of your manual (page 9).
- Anticipate the testing to take 5-6 minutes for each skill. You should demonstrate each task with the proper equipment prior to your child's attempt.

6:10-6:35 pm - Conduct Readiness Test

- Perform the test for each skill that is explained in your manual. Each skill should take approximately 5 minutes.

6:35-7:00 pm - WEEK 1 Exercises

- After the testing is complete, demonstrate the Week 1 activities (page 15) while stressing the Performance Cues. Perform each skill development exercise again. Each skill will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

7:00 pm - Wrap Up

- Briefly review what was learned in this session and we encourage you to practice these skills prior to your next session.

WEEK 1



Skill Development Sessions

at Home! 5:45 pm - Set-Up

- Have your equipment ready for the skills to be performed each week.
- Refer to the Performance Cues on page 27 for each station.

6:00-6:10 - Preview of Exercises

- Review exercises for that week prior to beginning.
- Review the Performance Cues with your child and remember to use the Performance Cues as praise when your child performs the exercise correctly.
- Remember that tasks may be altered (adjust the distances, etc.) to make the skill easier or more difficult to suit your child’s ability.
- Now select a skill with which to begin your session. Your skill rotation can be varied each week if you would like.

6:10-6:20 pm - Begin Skill Development Exercises

- Each skill should be reviewed with the child before he/she actually begins the task. Concentrate on proper execution of the Performance Cues by your child, and not necessarily the results.
- Remember the importance of the Performance Cues and giving positive feedback to your child.

6:20-7:00 pm - Rotate to all Stations

- Rotate through the rest of the skills, switching approximately every 10 minutes.

7:00 pm - Wrap Up

- Feel free to practice with your child throughout the week.
- You are welcome to discuss what skills will be learned the following week.

Special note for Week 6:

You will see that there is only one exercise scheduled for Week 6 in the Skill Development Exercises set-up section. We encourage you to review the skill exercises learned in Weeks 1-5 at the conclusion of your program.

NOTE: Don’t forget to complete the Sports Readiness Post-Test after you have completed all 6 sessions. Compare the results to the Pre-Test from the first week. This test is for you to be able to track your child’s progress. The test scores will also give you an objective assessment of your child’s ability in each individual skill and which skills may need more work.

WEEKS 2-6



Introduction

at Home!

When should I test my child?

Your child should be tested **prior** to beginning the Start Smart at Home program and then **after** completing the program to gauge progress.

Why is my child tested?

The Readiness Test is qualitative, meaning it focuses on performing the skill movement correctly (and not necessarily the results) by following the Performance Cues (page 27). After the test is complete, read the “Interpreting Test Scores” section of this manual as it will determine your child’s level of sport readiness.

How should the test be administered?

Read the directions and set-up for each skill area in this manual.

****IMPORTANT****
Do not give your child any additional instructions other than what is provided to ensure the accuracy of the test results.

How should my child be scored during the test?

Use the score sheets provided in your manual for the skill assessment. Give a “✓” for each component that is successfully completed, and an “X” if the component is not successfully completed. **Take as many trials as necessary for you to assess each component individually.**

Parent Self-Test

Following the Readiness Test you will find the Parent Self-Test and an answer key. Please complete this prior to beginning the Start Smart at Home program. The purpose of the test is to aid you in understanding your role as a youth sport parent.



at Home!

Throwing Test

Throwing Test Set Up and Equipment Requirements

On a large wall (at least 10 feet high by 20 feet wide), mark a circle eight feet in diameter with either chalk or masking tape. Use the Koosh Ball for this test.

Instructions

Your child gets one practice throw and then six additional throws to get the ball inside the circle from the designated throwing line. He/she may step over the line when throwing.

Verbal Instructions to Your Child

“Stand behind the line when you throw. You may step over it when you throw. You will get one practice throw and then the next six are for scores. Throw the ball as hard as you can and try to hit the center of the circle.”

THROWING TEST

OVERHAND THROWING TASK COMPONENTS	PRETEST	POSTTEST
Child faces non-dominant side toward the target before throwing.		
Child takes ball back behind their head.		
Child’s belly button rotates toward the target while throwing.		
Child’s shoulder rotates toward the target during the throw.		
Child steps toward the target with body weight shifting forward.		
Child’s throwing arm follows through across and in front of body.		

UNDERHAND THROWING TASK COMPONENTS	PRETEST	POSTTEST
Child faces the target.		
Child brings their arm down and behind their body.		
Child swings arm and ball down and forward.		
Child steps toward the target with body weight shifting forward.		
Child releases ball in front of body.		



at Home!

Catching Test

Catching Test Set Up and Equipment Requirements

Mark off 2 lines on the floor (10 feet apart). Have your child stand on one line and you stand on the other line. You and your child should face each other and you should start with the Koosh Ball in hand.

Instructions

Toss the Koosh Ball in an arc to your child so that he/she does not have to take more than one step to catch the ball. If he/she moves more than one step and does not catch the ball, the trial should be taken over.

Verbal Instructions to Your Child

“Stand on the line and when I toss you the ball try to catch it with your hands before it hits the ground. You can step over the line to catch the ball.”

CATCHING TEST

CATCHING TASK COMPONENTS	PRETEST	POSTTEST
Child’s hands move forward to meet the ball.		
Child steps toward the ball while attempting to catch.		
Child maintains eye contact with the ball throughout the catch.		
Child’s fingers point outward with thumbs toward each other for the catch.		
Child’s hands and arms “give” to absorb the force of the ball.		
Child uses only hands to catch the ball...does not “hug” the ball with arms.		



at Home! **Batting Test**

Batting Test Set Up and Equipment Requirements

In an open area, mark off 2 lines (15 feet apart). You will need a batting tee, a bat, and the soft foam ball.

Instructions

Place the tee on one of the marked lines. Have your child stand next to the tee with his/her non-dominant side facing the target area. He/she will try to hit the foam ball off the tee so that it travels over the other 15-foot line.

Verbal Instructions to Your Child

“Stand facing the batting tee with the bat in your hands ready to swing when I say ‘go’. Try to hit the ball hard so that it goes in the air and lands past the line.”

BATTING TEST

BATTING TASK COMPONENTS	PRETEST	POSTTEST
Child’s dominant hand is on top of the grip.		
Child’s bat is drawn back over the shoulder with arms extended		
Child’s hips and shoulders rotate during the forward swing.		
Child steps forward or transfers weight forward during the swing.		
Child’s eyes are focused on the ball.		
Child swings bat in a horizontal plane with a follow through.		



at Home! **Running / Agility Test**

Running / Agility Test Set Up and Equipment Requirements

In an open area, mark off a starting and stopping point 30 feet apart. No equipment is needed.

Instructions

Your child will begin at the starting point. On your call, your child will run to the stopping point by either zig zagging, running straight or curved.

Verbal Instructions to the Child

“Stand at the starting point. First I will tell you how you will run (zig zagged, straight or curved) and then I’ll say, ‘Go’. Run as fast as you can to the finish line.”

RUNNING / AGILITY TEST

RUNNING TASK COMPONENTS	PRETEST	POSTTEST
Child keeps his/her head up.		
Child “leans into” run slightly.		
Child lifts his/her knees.		
Child bends elbows and swings arms freely.		
Child runs on the balls of his/her feet.		
Child runs lightly.		



at Home!

READINESS TEST

Parent Pre-Test

Read through the following Parent Test and take it yourself. The purpose of this test is to aid you in understanding your role in youth sports and Start Smart.

True or False Questions

- 1) Children go through basically the same order of developing motor skills, but not at the same rate or the same time.

True False

- 2) The focus of the Start Smart program is only on the development of motor skills.

True False

- 3) Children should show an increase in confidence and a more positive outlook on participation in organized sports as a result of the Start Smart program.

True False

- 4) Winning is the most important aspect of children's organized sports.

True False

- 5) Discipline and positive reinforcement can help to create a mutual respect between a parent and a child.

True False

Short Essay Questions

- 6) Briefly describe what you think the role of a parent is in children's sports.
- 7) Please describe the purpose of the Start Smart program.
- 8) Please explain this statement: Expect Success (from your child).
- 9) Name several keys to your child's improvement in sports.
- 10) What are some things you can do as a parent to show support for your child in his/her sports programs?



at Home!

READINESS TEST

Parent Pre-Test Answer Key

Read the answers to the test questions. These questions and answers should aid you in understanding your role in youth sports and Start Smart.

True or False Questions

- 1) Children go through basically the same order of developing motor skills, but not at the same rate or at the same time. **True- Children learn in basically the same order, but at significantly different rates. Keep in mind not to compare different children who may be the same age but are much different physically.**
- 2) The focus of the Start Smart program is only on the development of motor skills. **False- Start Smart focuses on many things including developing parent/child bonds, social skills and teaching parents how to best instruct their children.**
- 3) Children should show an increase in confidence and a more positive outlook on participation in organized sports as a result of the Start Smart program. **True- When children learn and improve on basic skills and receive positive and encouraging feedback from parents, their confidence and enthusiasm for sports is bound to improve.**
- 4) Winning is the most important aspect in children's organized sports. **False- It is important to stress more important aspects such as having fun, making friends, and building self-confidence.**
- 5) Discipline and positive reinforcement can help to create a mutual respect between parent and child. **True- Respect between a parent and child grows when children receive positive reinforcement, words of encouragement, and when necessary, proper discipline.**

Short Essay Questions

- 6) Briefly describe what you think the role of a parent is in children's sports. **Show support and unconditional love, express support of coaches and officials, and become "kid oriented".**
- 7) Please describe the purpose of the Start Smart program. **To prepare children for organized sports, to promote maximum involvement of parent and child, to promote sportsmanship and social skills, to help parents teach their child(ren) the basic motor skill necessary for participation in sports, and to help prepare parents for their role in children's sports.**
- 8) Please explain this statement: Expect Success (from your child). **Children need encouragement and need to know what you expect them to learn and improve.**
- 9) Name several keys to your child's improvement in sports. **Positive reinforcement, encouragement, support, unconditional love, practicing with your child, etc...**
- 10) What are some things you can do as a parent to show support for your child in their sports programs? **Learn the rules of the sport and the rules of the team, support the coaches, be honest about your child's ability, avoid talk of scholarships and pro-contracts at an early age, refrain from the use of alcohol and tobacco at all children's functions, etc.**



Interpreting the Test Scores

at Home!

Children Learn at Different Rates

These tests were developed to give professionals and parents an educated estimate of when children are ready to begin participation in organized sports programs. Motor skill specialists agree, in all aspects of children’s development, that all children go through basically the same skill sequence of motor skill development, but not necessarily at the same rate or time. For a variety of reasons, all children do not reach the same level of skill performance at the same time. For example, there may be a wide range of performance scores on the qualitative assessment tests in a group of children who are all the same age. This is to be expected, and should be considered “normal.”

Be Patient with your Child’s Progress

As your child proceeds through the Start Smart Baseball at Home program, you will constantly be evaluating his/her progress. As your child meets the goals for each task, he/she is then ready to move onto the next task. If not, it simply means that your child needs more practice and encouragement to perform the task. It does NOT mean that your child does not have the ability or will never be able to perform the task.

Do not rush your child out of this developmental program and into a competitive sports program before he/she is ready. Remember that children must not only be physically ready to play organized sports, but it is important that they are emotionally ready as well. Your child may benefit more during this time by experiencing success and will gain confidence in his/her abilities by continuing in the Start Smart Baseball at Home program.

Interpreting the Qualitative Assessment Test

Each child should reach a “mature level” in each skill by age six, and definitely before entering an organized sports program. A “mature level” is achieved when all of the described task components on the assessment tests are consistently demonstrated when performing the particular skill.

If one or more of the components is not observed when the child performs the skill, then more practice and instruction is needed and the parent and child should focus on these remaining components. After the child has demonstrated a “mature level” on all skills (the child consistently demonstrates that he/she can accomplish all of the tasks in the skill assessment tests), then he/she has met the minimum skills necessary to begin organized sports.



at Home!

Introduction

This section will be your guide to conducting the skills for each session of your Start Smart at Home program. Each skill is described in detail and can be conducted from the comfort of your home.

****IMPORTANT****

Please remember that your child should successfully complete one skill before moving on to a more difficult one.

Feel free to review the previous week’s skills before starting each session. Always remember to emphasize the Performance Cues and keep the Program Guidelines (page 4) in mind during each session.

When performing the skill development exercises, feel free to alter the difficulty of each skill to help your child excel. This may be increasing or decreasing distances, providing larger or smaller targets at which to aim or simplifying the running/agility skills.

Some of the skills will require you to use additional materials. Most of the materials that you may need should be household items. If you don’t have an item, feel free to use an appropriate substitution for that particular item. For example, you may use rope or string instead of masking tape to mark a line on the floor.

You may purchase additional Start Smart equipment by calling our National Office at 800-729-2057 or directly through our Online Store at shop.nays.org.

We look forward to seeing pictures from your program as we like to use those on our website and in promotional pieces. Feel free to mail or email your pictures to us at the following address:

**Start Smart Sports Development Programs
2050 Vista Parkway
West Palm Beach, FL 33411
Email: startswithnays.org**

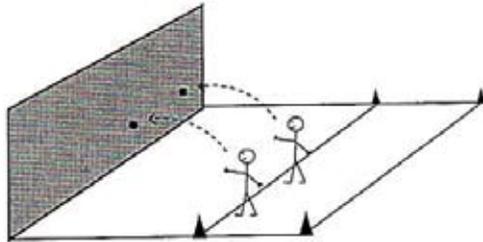


Station #1 - Throwing
Throwing at a Large Target

at Home!

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: KOOSH BALL AND MASKING TAPE

Mark a line 5 feet away from a large target such as a wall. Have your child stand on a marked line and throw a Koosh Ball overhand at the target area. Emphasize distance rather than accuracy. Also, remember to emphasize the Performance Cues. When your child is able to get 8 out of 10 balls to reach the target, increase the distance your child is standing from the wall in five foot increments.



Station #2 - Catching

Catching a Ball Rolled by a Partner

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: FOAM BALL

Your child stands across from you and you slowly roll a foam ball on the ground to your child. Remember to emphasize the Performance Cues. Your child bends down and catches the ball with both hands, then slowly rolls the ball back to you. Your child should successfully catch the ball 8 out of 10 times.

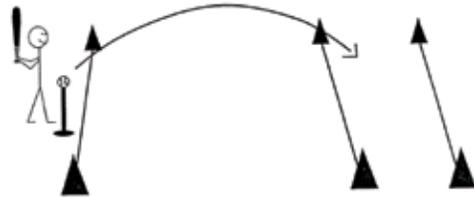


Station #3 - Batting

Batting a Stationary Ball Off a Tee

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: BATTING TEE, BAT, FOAM BALL AND MASKING TAPE

Set up the batting tee and mark a line ten feet away. Have your child use the bat to hit a ball off the tee so that the ball travels in the air and lands beyond the line. Increase the distance that the ball must travel when your child is able to hit the ball beyond the line 8 out of 10 times. Move the line closer if your child is not succeeding.

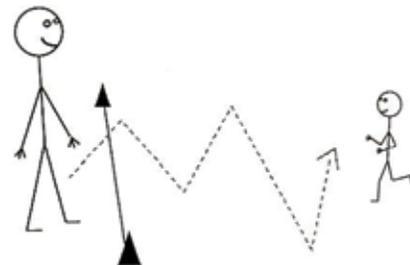


Station #4 - Running/Agility

Run and Change Directions on a Signal

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: NONE

Have your child begin running and on your call. Tell your child to cut to the right or to the left (zig-zag). As your child improves, have him/her turn his/her head and look at you after making each cut while running (as if he/she was going to catch a ball).



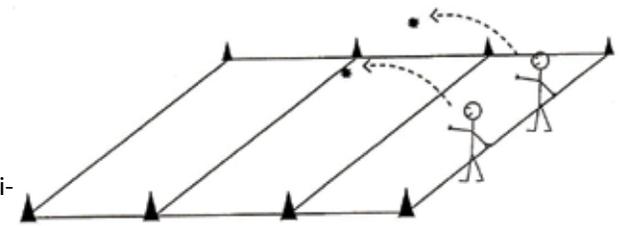
Station #1 - Throwing

at Home!

Throwing Overhand for Distance

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: KOOSH BALL AND MASKING TAPE

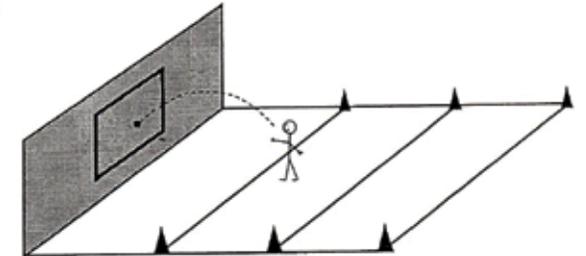
Mark off a throwing line and lines at increments of 5 feet. Have your child throw a Koosh Ball overhand 10 times trying to get 8 out of 10 balls to land beyond the appropriate line and continue on at five foot increments as success is achieved at each distance.



Throwing Overhand for Accuracy at a Smaller Target

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: KOOSH BALL AND MASKING TAPE

Designate a large target area (8 feet x 8 feet) with tape on a wall or other surface and mark off a throwing line an appropriate distance away and at 5 foot increments. Have your child use a Koosh Ball to throw overhand at the target. When successful 8 out of 10 times, have the child move back 5 feet and repeat.



Station #2 - Catching

Catching a Self Tossed Ball

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: BALLOONS AND KOOSH BALLS

Using first a balloon and then a Koosh Ball, your child tosses the ball in the air just above his/her head, then catches it at waist level. After successfully completing 8 out of 10 catches, have your child toss the ball higher, reaching up and catching it above his/her head. Repeat the activity, with your child jumping up to catch the ball as high as possible.



Catching a Ball Tossed by a Partner

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: KOOSH BALL

Have your child stand across from you. Softly toss the Koosh Ball underhand in a slight arc to your child. After your child can catch the ball with both hands 8 out of 10 times, increase the distance, speed and arc of the ball in gradual increments to increase difficulty.



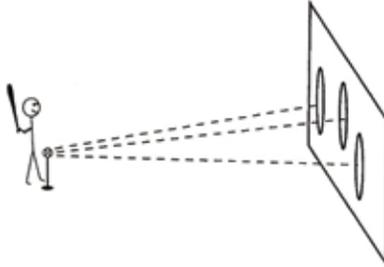


Station #3 - Batting

at Home! **Striking a Ball Off a Batting Tee to a Marked Area**

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: BATTING TEE, MASKING TAPE, BAT, FOAM BALL

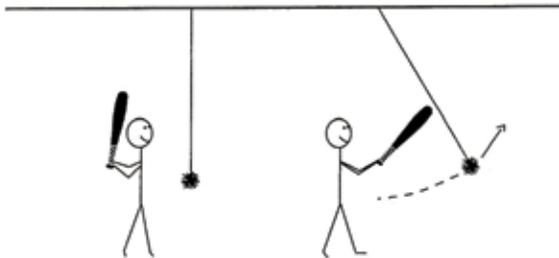
Set up the batting tee 15 feet from a wall and make 3 circles on the wall with masking tape. Have your child attempt to hit the ball off the batting tee to the designated area. You will ask your child to hit the right, left or center circle. Increase the distance that the ball must travel after your child can successfully hit the ball into the appropriate circle 8 out of 10 times.



Striking a Suspended Ball With a Bat

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: BAT, KOOSH BALL AND STRING (STICK OR POLE OPTIONAL)

Tie a Koosh Ball to a rope and hang it from the ceiling or tie it to the end of a pole. Make sure that the ball is at the child's waist level and is stationary. Encourage your child to stand behind and to the side of the ball, a bat's length away. Your child should successfully hit the ball 8 out of 10 times.

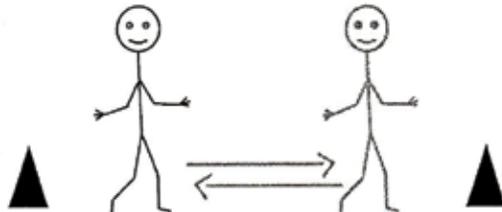


Station #4 - Running/Agility

Line and Slide Back-and-Forth

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: NONE

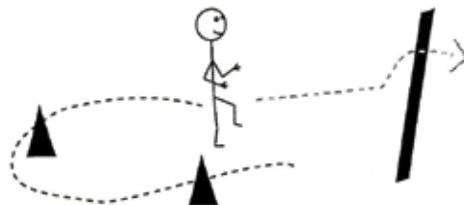
You and your child stand next to each other and practice sliding back-and-forth to the right and left. As the child becomes proficient, have him/her slide 4 times, then make a half turn, and slide 4 times again and turn.



Run Around and Dodge Obstacles

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: CONES

Your child will run around an obstacle course or figure 8 you have set up. As your child improves, ask him/her to increase his/her speed.

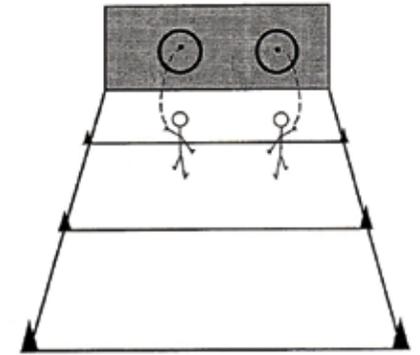


Station #1 - Throwing

at Home! **Throwing Overhand for Accuracy at a Smaller Target**

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: KOOSH BALL, MASKING TAPE AND HULA HOOPS (OPTIONAL)

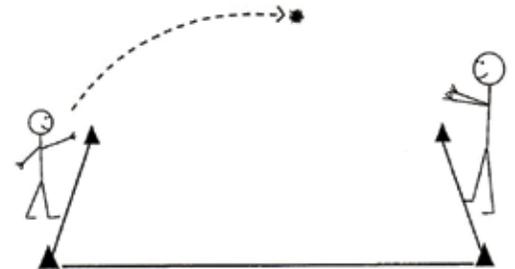
Put Hula Hoops or taped circles on a wall (3 feet from the ground) and mark a starting line 5 feet away. Your child will throw a Koosh Ball overhand at the Hula Hoop or taped circle. After throwing 8 out of 10 balls inside the circle, encourage your child to move back 5 feet and repeat.



Throwing to a Partner

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: KOOSH BALL AND MASKING TAPE

Mark 2 lines, 10 feet apart and stand behind the first line and have your child stand behind the second line. Play throw and catch with a Koosh Ball. After your child completes 8 out of 10 throw and catches successfully, move back at 5 foot increments. Repeat at the next line back and as the child is successful, increase the height and speed of throws.

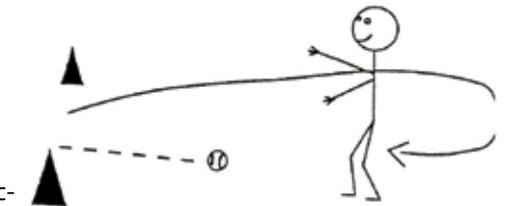


Station #2 - Catching

Catching a Rolling Ball

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: FOAM BALL

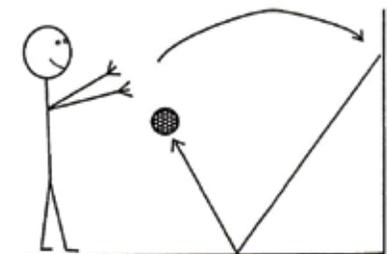
Have your child roll the Foam Ball slowly away from him/herself, run ahead, get in front of the ball, and bend down and catch the ball with both hands. Encourage your child to complete 8 out of 10 catches successfully.



Catching a Ball as it Rebounds from a Wall

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: FOAM BALL AND GLOVE

Have your child stand 10 feet from the wall and have him/her throw the Foam Ball at the wall so that it rebounds and then bounces on the ground between himself/herself and the wall. Your child should catch the ball with a glove as it bounces from the floor. With success, repeat moving farther from the wall and throwing the ball harder.



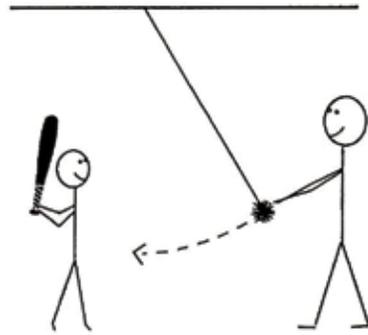


Station #3 - Batting

at Home! Batting a Moving Suspended Ball

Equipment Needed: Bat, Koosh Ball and String (Stick or Pole Optional)

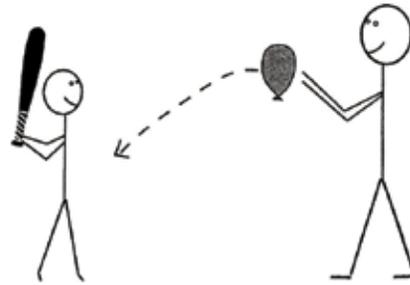
Tie a Koosh Ball from a rope and hang it from the ceiling or tie it to the end of a pole. Make sure that the Koosh Ball hangs at about the waist-level of your child. Hold the suspended Koosh Ball, move back from your child, hold the ball up, and then release it so that it moves at the same speed and at the same arc each time. Your child strikes the ball with the bat, as the ball approaches the strike area, hitting the ball away 8 out of 10 times.



Hit a Slowly Moving Large Balloon with a Bat

Equipment Needed: Bat and Balloon

Give your child the bat and have him/her stand across from you. Slowly toss a large balloon to the strike area so your child can successfully hit the balloon 8 out of 10 times. As your child shows improvement, take a few steps backwards to increase difficulty.

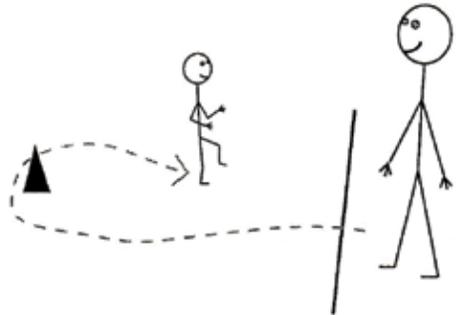


Station #4 – Running/Agility

Skip Forward, Backwards, in a Circle or in Different Directions

Equipment Needed: None

Your child may need to practice hopping first. Then, on your call, your child will try skipping right, left, backwards or in a circle (whichever direction you call).



Jump!

Equipment Needed: Balloon

You will toss a balloon high in the air and your child will jump up as high as he/she can to catch it.

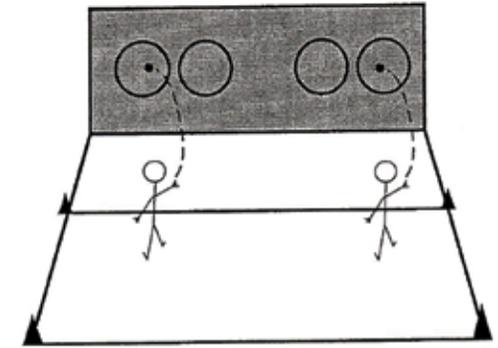


Station #1 - Throwing

at Home! Throwing for Accuracy at Two Smaller Targets

Equipment Needed: Koosh Ball, Hula Hoops, Masking Tape

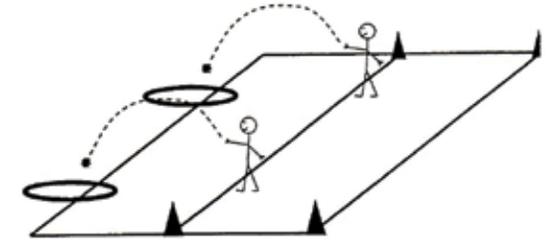
Prop, tape or tie Hula Hoops in sets of two in a vertical position 3 feet above the ground, and space the hoops 2 feet apart from each other. Mark a starting line 5 feet from the hoops and have your child begin throwing 10 times at the hoops, alternating between the right hoops, and then the left, getting 4 out of 5 in each hoop. As your child improves, encourage him/her to move back at five-foot increments.



Throwing Underhand to a Target for Accuracy

Equipment Needed: Koosh Ball, Masking Tape and Hula Hoops (optional)

Mark a starting line and put Hula Hoops (or taped circles) on the ground 5 feet away. Have your child stand on the starting line and throw a Koosh Ball underhand so that it lands inside the Hula Hoops (or taped circles) 8 out of 10 times. Remember to emphasize the Performance Cues. Encourage your child to move back at five-foot increments as he/she achieves success.



Station #2 - Catching

Catching a Ground Ball

Equipment Needed: Foam Ball and Glove

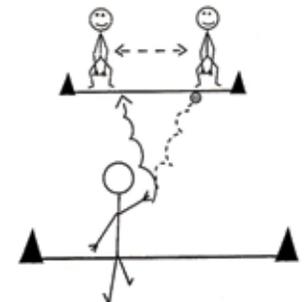
Have your child stand across from you. Softly roll the Foam Ball to your child. As your child fields the ball, he/she throws it quickly back to you. Use the glove in this activity as your child gains confidence.



Moving to Catch a Ground Ball

Equipment Needed: Foam Ball and Glove

Have your child stand across from you. Softly roll the Foam Ball to your child, but for this activity, roll the ball alternating to the right and left of your child, so that he/she must shuffle one or two steps to either side in order to field the ball. Use the glove in this activity as your child gains confidence.





Station #3 - Batting

at Home! **Striking a Small Ball Tossed from the Front with a Bat**

Equipment Needed: Bat and Koosh Ball

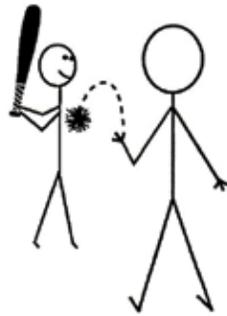
Stand in front of your child, 10 feet away, and softly toss the Koosh Ball in a horizontal direction to the striking area, so that your child can hit the ball successfully 8 out of 10 times.



Striking a Small Ball Tossed from the Side with a Bat

Equipment Needed: Bat and Koosh Balls

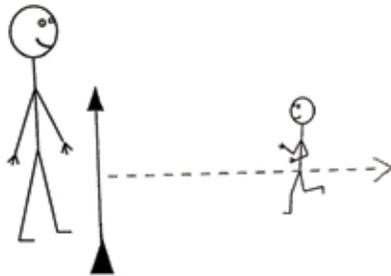
Stand to the side of your child (approximately 5 feet away) and softly toss a Koosh Ball so that the batter can strike the ball into the designated area. Your child should be able to complete this 8 out of 10 times. Repeat, requiring your child to hit the ball a farther distance.



Station #4 – Running/Agility

Run Backwards and Sideways

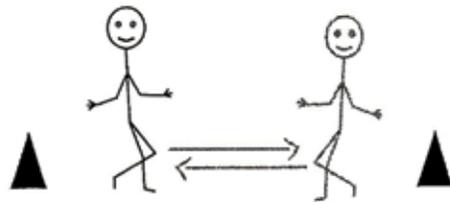
Equipment Needed: Masking Tape or Cones
Your child will practice running backwards for 20-50 feet from a starting point. Have your child then practice running sideways, right, and then left. As your child improves his/her skills, have him/her increase his/her speed.



Grapevine

Equipment Needed: None

Have your child do a "grapevine" sideways across the floor by taking a step to the side with his/her right foot, crossing over the right leg with his/her left foot, stepping to the side again with the right foot, and then crossing behind the right leg with his/her left foot (step, cross over, step, cross behind). Repeat to the left. As your child improves, have him/her increase their speed.

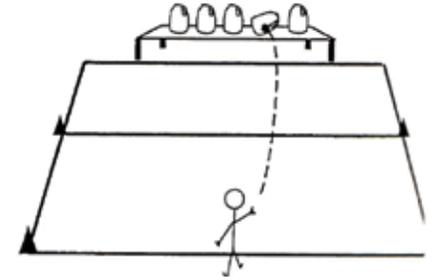


Station #1 - Throwing

at Home! **Throwing for Accuracy at Multiple Small Targets**

Equipment Needed: Koosh Ball, Small Table, Plastic Bottles

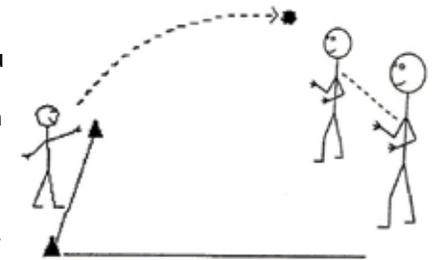
Place 5 plastic milk jugs or soft drink containers 6 inches apart on a table or bench. Have your child throw Koosh Balls over and underhand from a line 5 feet away. The object is to hit all 5 jugs in as few throws as possible. When your child is able to achieve this task in 6 throws, challenge him/her to move farther back and try again.



Throwing to a Moving Target both Underhand and Overhand

Equipment Needed: Koosh Ball

Have your child stand across from you. Your child will throw the Koosh Ball to you as you run to the right. Your child should throw 8 out of 10 times so that you have a good chance of catching the ball. Repeat while running to the left, and then back away from your child. Complete 8 out of 10 throws for each situation. Then repeat, increasing the distance by 5 feet.

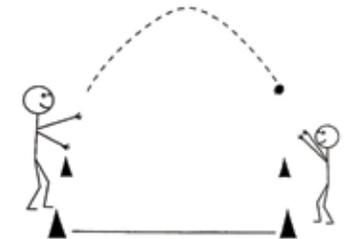


Station #2 - Catching

Catching Fly Balls

Equipment Needed: Koosh Ball and Glove

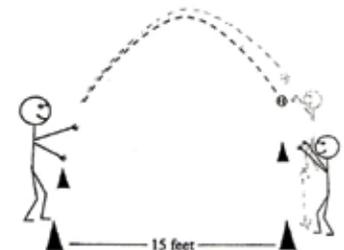
Stand 15 feet away from your child throw a Koosh Ball in a high arc to your child. Increase the distance at increments of ten feet after your child catches 8 out of 10. Continue this task as your child continues to achieve success, by increasing distance and changing the speed and arc of the ball. Add a glove as your child gains confidence.



Moving to the Right and Left to Catch Fly Balls

Equipment Needed: Koosh Ball and Glove

Your child will need the glove and you will need the Koosh Ball (stand approximately 15 feet apart). Your child moves to the right a step or two to catch the fly ball that you have thrown to the right. Then complete the same task to the left. Complete 8 out of 10 successfully, and as your child achieves success, increase the distance and arc of the flight of the ball and mix up the throws to the right and left sides of your child.





Station #3 - Batting

at Home! **Striking a Small Ball Tossed from a Longer Distance, with a Bat**
Equipment Needed: Bat and Foam Ball

Toss the ball from 20 feet away to your child, so that he/she can hit the ball successfully 8 out of 10 times. As your child demonstrates high rates of success and confidence, then gradually increase distance the ball is pitched from, the speed with which it is pitched and the distance it must be hit.



Hitting a Self-Tossed Ball with a Bat

Equipment Needed: Bat and Foam Ball

Your child holds the bat in his/her dominant hand with the bat over his/her shoulder, leaving room on the grip to place the non-dominant hand below the other hand on the bat. Standing in a side-facing position, your child then tosses the ball softly upward with the non-dominant hand, grasps the bat with the other hand and swings at the ball as it drops into the strike zone. Your child should make solid contact 8 out of 10 times.

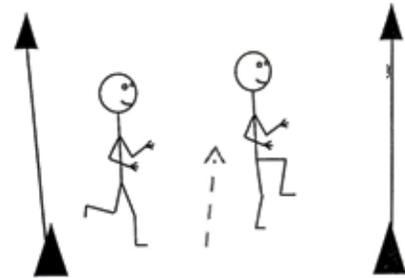


Station #4 – Running/Agility

Run Then Leap

Equipment Needed: Masking Tape or Cones

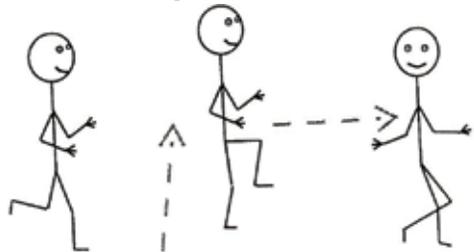
Mark 2 lines, 15 feet apart. Have your child run for a few steps and then leap. Alternate the take-off foot as the child improves.



Combine Running with Other Baseball Skills

Equipment Needed: Foam Ball or Koosh Ball (optional)

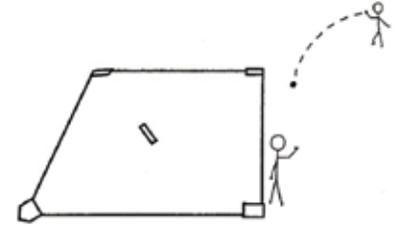
Have your child begin running, and on your call your child will change to skipping, sliding, walking, or the grapevine. You should mix these calls. To increase the difficulty, have your child receive a ball while doing the above activities.



Station #1 - Throwing

at Home! **Throwing to a Designated Base from Various Field Positions**
Equipment Needed: Koosh Ball

Position your child in the outfield of your mock tee ball field and have him/her throw the Koosh Ball to you as you are positioned at one of the bases. After throwing to one base, you should switch to another base until your child has thrown to each base successfully. You should ask each time, "Which base am I at now?" and "What position are you playing now?" As you change bases, your child should move to different positions. The goal here is to familiarize your child with the different positions of the field and get him/her comfortable throwing to different bases.

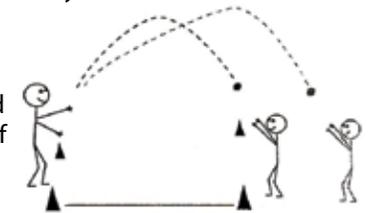


Station #2 - Catching

Moving Forward and Backward to Catch Fly Balls

Equipment Needed: Koosh Ball, Foam Ball and Glove

Your child moves to the right a step or two to catch a fly Koosh Ball or Foam Ball that you have thrown to the right from 15 feet away. Your child should succeed 8 out of 10 times from each side. You should then mix up the throws to the right and the left. As your child achieves success, increase the distance and arc of the ball and add the glove.

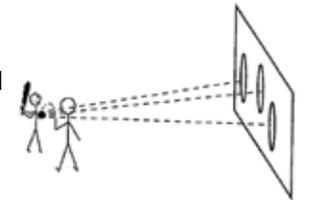


Station #3 - Batting

Hitting a Small Ball Tossed From the Side to a Designated Area

Equipment Needed: Bat, Koosh Ball

Stand to the side of your child (5 feet away) and softly toss the Koosh Ball so that your child can strike the ball to a marked area (20 feet away). Your child should be able to complete 8 out of 10 times. As your child becomes successful, have him/her hit the ball to the areas from a farther distance.

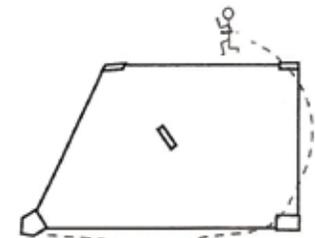


Station #4 – Running/Agility

Run Bases

Equipment Needed: None

Your child will practice running from home plate to first base, first to second base, second to third base, and third base to home plate. He/she will learn about the order of the bases and how to run for both speed and for quick starting and stopping ability. You will tell your child to which base he/she should run, or whether to run all the way around to home plate for speed. As your child gains confidence, have him/her practice running 2-3 bases at a time. It is important to stress that he/she should never jump for any base, and they can run through first unless they are continuing on to second base.





SECTION 6 – PERFORMANCE CUES

at Home! Introduction

Performance Cues are designed to teach children basic sports mechanics for each skill area. Use these to encourage your child and praise him/her when he/she remembers individual steps involved with the particular skill. You will find visual (as well as written) cues for each skill on pages 27-31. Refer to these cues often as they will ensure that your child is developing proper technique needed to successfully master each skill.

THROWING

Overhand

- Stand sideways to the target
- Throwing hand and arm way back
- Big step forward with opposite foot
- Belly button to target as you throw
- Shoulder first, then elbow, forearm and hand forward
- Throw as hard as you can

Underhand

- Face target
- Throwing hand and arm way back
- Swing arm and ball down and forward
- Shift weight from back to front
- Release ball in front of body

BATTING

- Stand with non-dominant side facing the hitting area
- Stand facing the tee or base
- Throwing hand on top of grip
- Bat back away from ball
- Keep eyes on the ball
- Step towards hitting area and swing level
- Transfer weight from back to front foot
- Follow through

CATCHING

- Move in front of ball
- Bend knees
- Reach up for high balls
- Reach out for low or rolling balls
- Watch ball to your hands
- Step towards the ball to catch
- Squeeze ball with both hands
- "Give" with the ball and bring to body

RUNNING/AGILITY

- Keep your head up
- "Lean into" run slightly
- Lift your knees
- Bend your elbows and swing your arms freely
- Run on the balls of your feet
- Run lightly



PERFORMANCE CUES

Throwing

at Home!

Equipment

Use an appropriate ball for throwing activities to teach your child the proper form of an overhand and underhand throw. We recommend and use the Koosh Ball in the Start Smart Baseball at Home program because it was proven to be a good motor skill development tool.

Skills

To focus on distance, have your child:

- Throw a ball at a large target such as a wall.
- Throw a ball beyond a marked line.

To focus on accuracy, have your child:

- Throw a ball into a hula hoop (or marked circle) on the ground.
- Throw a ball at a hula hoop (or taped circle) on a wall.
- Throw a ball at milk jugs or soft drink containers on a table or bench.

Overhand Throw



Stand sideways to the target.
Hand and arm way back.
Big step toward target with opposite foot.



Shoulder first, then elbow, forearm, and hand forward.
Bellybutton to the target as the child throws.
Throw as hard as you can!

Underhand Throw



Face the target.
Hand and arm way back behind the child's body.
Big step toward target with opposite foot.



Swing arm and ball down and forward.
Shift weight forward.
Release ball in front of body.



Catching

at Home!

Equipment

Use an appropriate ball to teach your child how to catch. We recommend and use the Koosh Ball because it is easy to catch, does not roll away if they miss, and can be absorbed into their hands or glove. As the children show improvement, encourage them to practice catching by using a small foam ball.

Skills

To practice catching a rolling ball:

Have your child roll a ball away from him/herself and get in front of the ball to catch it.

Roll the ball back-and-forth between you and your child.

To practice catching a ball in the air, have your child:

Throw the ball to him/herself.

Catch a ball thrown by you.

Catch a ball as it rebounds from the wall.

Move a few steps to the right or left as you throw the ball to the right or left.

Throw a ball at milk jugs or soft drink containers on a table or bench.

Catching a Rolling Ball



Move in front of the ball.
Bend knees and stay low.
Reach out.



Watch the ball into your hand or glove.
Squeeze the ball.
"Give" with the ball and bring to the body.

Catching a Ball in the Air



Bend knees slightly.
Reach out.



Watch the hand into your hand or glove.
Squeeze the ball.
"Give" with the ball.



Batting

at Home!

Equipment

To begin, use a batting tee to teach your child how to swing a hit a ball. As your child shows improvement, toss the ball to him/her instead of using a tee.

Skills

To practice batting from a tee:

Hit a ball past a marked line.

Hit a ball to a designated target.

To practice batting without a tee, have your child:

Hit a ball that is tossed by you.

Hit a ball tossed from the side by you.

Hit a balloon that was tossed by you.

Batting from a Tee



Stand facing the tee.
Stand slightly behind and a bat's length to the side of the tee.
Place your dominant hand on the top of the grip, and your other hand on the bottom.
Bat back, over your back shoulder.
Keep your eyes on the ball.



Step to the side with your non-dominant foot, swing level and hard.
Transfer weight to your front foot.
Follow through.

Batting without a Tee



Stand with your non-dominant side facing the target.
Stand slightly behind and a bat's length to the side of the "base".
Place your dominant hand on the top of the grip, and your other hand on the bottom.
Bat back, over your back shoulder.
Keep your eyes on the ball.



Step to the side with your non-dominant foot, swing level and hard.
Transfer weight to your front foot.
Follow through.



at Home!

A program of the

National _____
ALLIANCE
_____ *For Youth Sports*

2050 Vista Parkway
West Palm Beach, FL 33411
800-729-2057
www.nays.org