



# *Introduction to Coaching and Getting Started*

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Welcome to Carine Cats Ball Club. This is an introduction to coaching and some drills to get you started. This is not a comprehensive coaching and training manual, just some examples that have worked with my teams as I have tried to teach our kids to play the great game of Tee-Ball.

I hope you enjoy coaching as much as I have and see your children develop in to not just great players, but great sports, great people and great team mates.

Thanks for taking your time and effort to coach your teams. Our club is built on your efforts!

Brian White

Coaching Coordinator ([teeballcoaching@carinecats.com.au](mailto:teeballcoaching@carinecats.com.au))

## **U7s GETTING STARTED**

Tee-Ball is all about FUN, FAIR PLAY, FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS and FAMILY INVOLVEMENT. This is most important to start in U7s and build on from here.

The main thing with Tee-Ball, at any age, is for the kids to have fun, and get better all the time. If they do this they will win more than they lose, but most importantly we will keep them in the game and help develop them as people.

Each child will develop at different stages, so persevere and focus on the basics. Even if your players get 1% better each training, they will have made huge improvements by season's end. Recognize, acknowledge and celebrate these improvements with the kids, through the season, to reinforce this learning and your relationship with the players.

The most important thing I found was to keep the kids involved and not waiting too long for their turns. The kids want to play, not wait in line, so get as many parents involved as you can. This will let you split the team into smaller groups and focus on the skills the players will need in the game, as well as keeping their attention and interest. By having the parents involved it will also create a great social environment in the team, and hopefully you will all make some new friends along the way.

Volunteers and support are very important, as there are many jobs to be done in the team, so by keeping the parents involved it is easier to ask for help in managing, umpiring, base coaching, scoring and general support.

One of your key allies in your season is your manager. If you have an organized manager you will have a better season as they will keep the kids organized while you are trying to coach the game. They will organize the scorer while you are warming the kids up and will keep the players in order on the bench and ready to bat.

If you, your manager and your kids are organized, then you will get more innings in during the game. That means the kids get more turns to bat, and more positions to field in. If you are unorganized, then the kids may only get one bat in a whole game and not think much of Tee-Ball.

You may decide to keep the same batting order through the season, it worked for me, but make sure you keep track of who batted last in the game, so you know where to start the batting order next game, and so give everyone equal opportunities. Spread your good hitters and fast runners through the order to keep the balance of your lineup.

Move your kids through each position on the field so they can play everywhere. We do this through the higher grades as well. Give them the chance to play every position and know all aspects of the game.

In the lower grades many hits will go to pitcher so team up your strong throws / good catchers and weaker throws / weaker catchers at First Base and Pitcher, so they have the best chance of making an out. Encourage Right Field to back up First Base to get them in the game and encourage your players to make the throw and try to get the outs.

I have always used a magnet board to show the kids where they are fielding next and their batting order. Then we give them the responsibility of being ready to play, while the managers can help guide them.

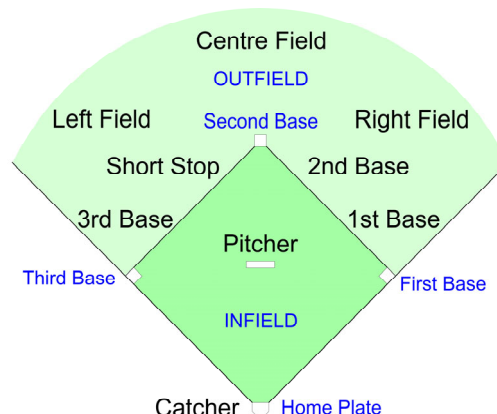


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## U7s FIRST TRAINING

This is a guide to what we did in our first training to get the kids started and may be of help to you. It is not the only way to do it, but our kids responded well, and we built on our skills and games from here.

**Introduce the field** – We started by gathering the kids at home plate and explaining that this was “Home”. Then as a group, led by the coach, we ran the kids through each base, stopping briefly at each position to explain, “This is First Base” etc. I encourage you to include both Second Base fielding position, Second Base and Short Stop so the kids understand the distinction. After the infield, take them through the outfield positions, then back to Pitcher, and finally to Home.



Now that they have had a brief introduction, with the coach near Home, call out a position, such as “First Base” and have the kids run there as a group. Then call out other positions and have them run as a group together to that position. It is fun for the kids, introduces each position, and starts to get them warmed up.

**Base Running (Speed Test)** – Get the kids to run around the bases and time them from Home, through 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and Home. This will give you an idea of who the fastest kids are and who is a bit slower. The kids will love to race!

**Base Running** – Line the kids up near Home and order them from your speed test. The coach, using his arm as a boom gate, tells the kids when to start running around the bases. Tell them to run as fast as they can, and for the kid behind to try and catch the kid in front. Try to start them so that they get close to catching the kids in front, or even to catch them, near Home. Shuffle the order and run it again with a different kid at the front so they all get to chase.

I like this as it is a competition for the kids, teaches them to run hard all the way around, and encourages them to run “heads up” while they chase the kid in front. This can be translated into the base runners looking for the base coach in the game, rather than just putting their heads down and being oblivious to the game.

**3 Groups of Skills** – Split the kids into 3 even groups. This will give you a manageable size to work with to focus on a skill. Use your parent helpers to run the groups so you can focus on one group or walking between the groups. As catching a hard ball in a glove was the hardest part to comprehend, I usually took that group, but it will depend on your group and your preference. After 10 minutes blow a whistle, or inform the kids, to swap groups. The groups are:

- **Batting** – Set up a tee for each player and give them a very brief introduction to hitting. Keep it very simple and just let them hit - we will focus on technique later. Get the kids to focus on hitting **HARD!** You can experiment with different sized balls depending on the skill of your group. For larger balls you can use a funnel to help hold the ball in place on the tee. Have the parents retrieving the hit balls and returning them to the batters. Work on technique later but if you want some ideas try [www.youtube.com/watch?v=nO3PKSAdUSw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nO3PKSAdUSw).
- **Throwing** – give the kids a brief introduction to the mechanics of throwing. A great video to assist you is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PbsQ3g33YQ>. Then setup some targets and get the kids to throw at them. We used storage tubs / crates that were standing up and encouraged the kids to throw hard and knock them over. Make sure each kid has their own target. The crates made a great sound and were a big target. At the older levels we use a tee with a ball on it so they have a smaller target to aim for.
- **Catching** – Coach to be on one knee in front of the kids. Get the kids to hold their glove in front of the other shoulder (ie right shoulder for right hander, left shoulder for left hander) and make a small throw to that position. The idea of having the glove here is that if they don't catch the ball, it won't hit them. As they get more confident you will get them to move their glove more centrally and catch in the middle of their chest.



Start with a hacky sack, or a tennis ball to teach technique and move on quickly to a Tee-Ball.

Encourage the kids to catch “Hands Up”! See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hu-gaaVLmNo>



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**Finish with a game – Dodgeball** – Always good to finish training with a game. A great one for your first training is to talk to the kids about their throwing. Now that they know how to throw, here is a fun test. Set the kids up in two lines facing each other 10 or so meters apart, or one single line. Give them all a tennis ball each and get the coach and as many parents as you can to run through the gap or along the line. The kids will throw the tennis balls and try to hit the adults. The tennis balls don't hurt, and the kids love it!

That is the end of training. You can use these drills in other trainings but always change what you do in each session. Otherwise the kids, and you, will get bored!

Make sure you are organized and ready to go at training. Have a plan for the session and a couple of things in reserve in case what you have planned isn't working. Below are some other ideas to use at training for newer players such as U7s. Whenever you are planning your training make sure you include some hitting, some throwing and catching, some fielding and some fun game / activity in each session.

The club will provide a gear bag with lots of equipment for you to use in your training and games. However it is always good to have more gear as we want the kids to be hands on rather than waiting for a turn. Many families will have their own tee and Tee-Balls. Ask your parents to bring these along to training so you have more equipment to use.

## **U7s OTHER TRAINING DRILLS**

**Hitting** – Split the kids up when you are doing hitting drills, depending on the number of tees you have. For U7s we used the parents and siblings to field the hit balls. While this group was hitting we ran the other players through other drills and then swapped them around. If you don't have parental support, set the kids up as fielders when not batting.

- **Go for Distance** – Set up cones going away from the tee and encourage the kids to see how many they can hit past. Give them more points for the further cones than the closer cones. Encourage them to hit it HARD!
- **Go for Direction** – Set up cones / markers etc at different locations and get the players to try and hit them. Give them points if they can hit them or points if they get close. This can be done as a standard hitting drill or as a fun game using the diamond and the players split into a couple of teams. If using the diamond, set up the markers (tees work well) between First Base and Second Base, and Second Base and Third Base, to encourage the kids to hit through gaps in the game.
- **Ground Balls** – Encourage the kids to hit it hard along the ground. Many players will struggle or not want to do this at first, so you can use push-ups, burpees etc if they hit it in the air. Remember we are not punishing the kids for hitting in the air, just having a fun consequence of going against the drill, so just make it one or two push-ups as a maximum.
- **Fly Balls** – Set up some cones a reasonable (for your level of players) distance away from the tee. Instruct the batters to hit over these markers so that the ball is travelling in the air. For some players you may need to move the cones in, and others move them out. Give them a challenge but we want the kids to be all hitting over the cones. Encourage "flat" hitting so the ball doesn't loop up too much offering a catch to the fielders.
- **Batting Box** - Talk to your players about how to stand in the batting box. Show them on the diamond how to position their feet if they want to hit to Left Field or Right Field. The coach can help the players in the game, but try to get the players doing it themselves as quickly as possible.
- **Drop the Bat** – Have a short exercise when the kids come up to Home Plate and have a swing off the tee. Get them to swing through, drop the bat – NOT THROW, and run hard to First Base. Make sure they run through First Base before slowing down and then turning to their RIGHT, away from Second Base. We never used a ball for this drill, as we wanted the kids to concentrate on the action of swinging and dropping the bat and running hard to First, instead of the actual hit. Many players will get so excited about the hit they will unintentionally throw the bat at the completion of the swing. We want to make sure this doesn't happen so no one is hurt.



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**Fielding Ground Balls** – Position is very important for fielding ground balls. We want the players, where possible, to field the balls underneath their eyes, in front of their body (not to the side), with the throwing hand supporting the glove. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfqSNwFVv1s>

- **Set up Position** – Have your players line up in front of the coach, 10 or so meters away, in single file. The coach will roll the ball to the right of the first player who will move across, make sure the ball rolls between their legs (without fielding it), then moves away to their right again to get out of the way of the next player. Repeat until all players are on the right with the first player, then do it again with the players moving to their left. Players to concentrate on getting their body in the right position so the ball rolls through their legs.
- **Fielding Ground Balls** – Same as above, but this time field the ball instead of letting it pass through the legs. Make sure the players field with the throwing hand next to the glove and covering the ball so it doesn't come out. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duJysUUo5zs> (about 30 seconds in)

**Tag** – Have two groups of players, one at First Base (as a runner) and one at Second Base in fielding position. Coach at Pitcher rolls the ball to the fielder at Second Base. A parent or the coach will send the runner from First Base to Second Base. The fielder should field the ground ball and tag the player running towards them. Make sure that the tag is made with TWO hands so the ball does not come out. Get the runner from First Base to run with his glove and join the other group when tagged. After the tag the fielder will swap groups to become a runner. This makes great competition between the kids and teaches them to field under pressure in a game type situation.

**Out at First** – Most of the outs in U7s will be made between Pitcher and First Base so it is important to match these players in their ability. For this drill we will use a parent or coach at First Base and concentrate on the throw from Pitcher.

Have two groups of players, one at Pitcher, and one at Home, with a parent or coach on First Base. Roll the ball to the Pitcher who will field and throw to First Base. While this is going on the other player at Home will run to First Base like someone who just hit the ball. The runner should concentrate on not slowing down until after reaching First Base and then turning to their RIGHT (away from Second Base).

Time the runner leaving home depending on the skill of your players, so that it will be a close result at First Base and the Pitcher remains under some game-like pressure when fielding the ball. Players to swap groups once their turn is complete. Runners should carry their glove so they are ready to field in the next group.

**Catching Fly Balls** – Same technique as teaching the kids to throw with the glove towards the shoulder of their throwing hand. Start by using a Hacky Sack and moving the players further back as they get more confident.

**Play Tee-Ball** – A favorite of the kids is just to play the Tee-Ball game. For 12 in a team, have 3 hitters, and the rest in infield positions, with a pitcher and catcher, and the outfield. Use parents and siblings as your outfielders if you are short of players.

Have the hitters bat through two or three times, depending on how much time you have. If all are on base and you run out of hitters bring the closest player home to hit again.

Have base coaches at First and Third to get the players used to listening for instruction. The coach should be at Home instructing the players and umpiring the game. Use this as a learning opportunity to explain things that happen in the game situation as they arise, and how the players could improve the play next time.

Once those players have hit, put them in the field and bring Catcher, Pitcher and First Base in to be the next hitters. Third Base, Short Stop and Second Base move into the First Base, Pitcher and Catcher positions respectfully, and the outfielders move to Third Base, Short Stop and Second Base. The hitters will take up the outfield positions.

This will cycle the players through each position to give them opportunities at each. It will also stop the kids asking to always be at their favorite position (such as Pitcher). Ensure the Pitcher has the correct protective gear on at all times and no practice swings from the players waiting to bat.



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## **FUN GAMES AND TRAINING EXERCISES**

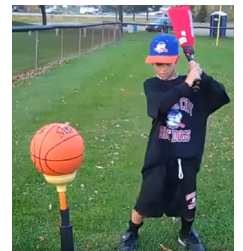
**Relay Races** – Have the kids line up and throw down the line, and back, as a race. You can modify this as the kid's skill develops. Talk to the kids about how to turn on the throw in an efficient manner as they get to the higher grades.

**Target Practice** – Set up a tee with a ball on it and have the kids try to throw and hit the ball. You can start with a larger ball (such as a flat netball / soccer ball – use a funnel in the top of the tee to hold the ball on if needed) and work down to a smaller ball as the skills develop.

**Sliding** – On a hot day set up some black plastic and use some soapy water to make it slippery. Then talk to the players about how to slide into a base and have them practice on the plastic. Get the players to wear their Tee-Ball pants and have towels ready for after. If you are up to it, demonstrate for the kids – they will think it is hilarious! Ensure the kids slide hands up and use cardboard if you can't get plastic and water - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8kiiOXW41kl> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BlbkFkhAMA>

**Chase down game** – Have two teams – one hitting and one fielding. Split the fielding team into 2 groups, one half on First Base and one half on Third Base. Get the hitter to hit the ball as far as they can and start running around the bases. Once the ball has been hit, the fielder on First and Third (one only for each) can leave the base and chase the ball. When they get to the ball and pick it up, the runner is called to stop and the hitting team receives one point for every base that has been reached. Repeat for the other batters and then swap.

**Jumbo ball** – Take the top of the tee out and put a funnel or plunger in instead. Use this to hold a deflated netball / basketball / soccer ball etc. Split the teams into two groups and have one hitting and one fielding. The fielders should occupy the infield positions. If you don't have enough for all positions the Pitcher can also play Catcher.



Have the batter hit off the modified tee and hit the deflated ball as hard as they can. Then the batter should drop the bat and run around the bases as fast as possible.

The fielders (no gloves required) will field the ball and get it to any two bases (a fielder must be holding the ball and touch the base, before passing it on to the next base). Once the ball has been through two bases, it must come to Home Plate. As soon as the ball is held and Home Plate is touched, the runner is called to stop.

The runner gets one point for their team for every base that has been touched. If the runner gets Home before the play is completed, they should turn and run for First Base again. Try to get Home twice if you can! A good side challenge between the kids is to see what is the record number of bases that can be reached in the play.

The fielders are able to pass the ball in any way they want including by throw or kick. Encourage them to work together as they would in a normal Tee-Ball game and to back each other up. No outs are made in Jumbo Ball so if the ball is caught off the bat, it is play on. The game stops once the ball has been through two bases and then back to Home.

Rotate the fielders through different positions in the game. Each batter will hit, and once all have, that will be the end of the innings and the two teams will swap. Play a couple of innings if you have time.

Another challenge that can be added is to remove the tee for the second innings and have the coach soft toss the ball to the hitters.

**Parents vs Kids game** – We use this as our pre-Christmas wind up and last training before the end of the season. The kids love it, and so do the parents. Make it harder for the parents by having them bat left handed with the bat upside down. Ensure the safety of the kids at all times when the adults are playing.

We do not normally allow older siblings to play these games as they find it harder to control the pace of the ball and are a bit more competitive which can lead to injuries for the younger players (who are our responsibility).

If you have older kids that are keen to join in, use them as umpires and base coaches, which they often enjoy.



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## GAME DAY

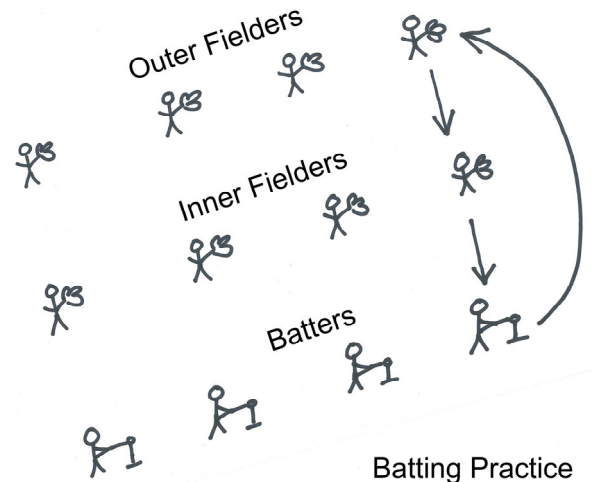
We have always used the same procedure on game day so the kids get into a routine, are organized and know what is required of them. In this way if the kids are organized and the coach / manager / scorers etc are organized, the game will move quickly and we will get in as many innings as possible in the hour allocated. The more innings played, the more at bats the kids will get, and the more positions they will get to play in.

## Warm Up

We start our warm up with 4 tees setup and 4 batters. 4 kids will then be fielders in front of the batters, at a safe distance (like an infielder on the diamond), and the final 4 kids will be backing up those fielders (as say outfielders). Let the batters hit for a few minutes and then send them to be the furthest fielders (outfielders). Bring the (in)fielders in to be batters and the previous (out)fielders in to be the (in)fielders. Cycle them through so everyone gets a hit.

This is a good opportunity for the coach to watch the players swing and help with technique.

If you have only three tees, have three "Catchers" next to the hitters that the fielders can return the balls to.



Once everyone has had a hit, bring the kids in and split them into a couple of groups (depending on how many adults or coaches you have) – 3 groups work well. Get these groups to line up in single file in front of each adult. Have the adult / coach roll the ball to the first kid in line so they can field the ball and throw it back to the coach, then go to the end of the line. Repeat this through the line and incorporate fly balls as the players skill improve.

Finish your warm up so the kids are on the bench 5 minutes before the start of play so you can ensure everyone is organized and ready to go.

## Start of Game

Talk to the kids on the bench prior to the game and make sure they know if they are batting or fielding first. Then make sure they know which order they are batting in or which position they are fielding in first. We use a magnet board to help the kids know what is required. The kids not fielding can help you change the magnets for the next innings.

Make sure the kids have their mouth guards in, shirts tucked in and shoe laces tied. Then get them to line up behind First Base or Third Base ready for the umpire.

## Game Play

Try to keep the game moving as quickly as possible so you get as many innings in as you can. Have the players run in between innings and be ready to bat / field as required. Save breaks till after the game so you don't waste time.

In U7 and U9 the coach is able to be in the field (out of the way, usually behind Second Base or Short Stop) to help guide the players. Encourage the players to try and get outs, and make the throws to do so. Encourage trying to get 3 outs and back into batting.

Encourage the players to field in their position and do their job for the team, not run to other position and take over. Encourage the players not directly involved in the play to back up their team mates.

Encourage fair play and fun. Respect the umpire's decisions (it is a hard job and nobody is perfect) and be ready for your turn. Enjoy the contest and the challenge rather than the win. There are no finals at the lower levels.



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## After the Game

Give three cheers to the other team and the umpires.

Talk to your team about good team plays in the game and acknowledge good individual efforts and improvements in skill. Share the awards between the players through the season – it is not hard to find great plays or improvements in each player of your team.

Make a note about things you need to work on / teach that you can use at your next training session. Also make a note of who your last batter was, so you know where to start for the next game.

## OTHER NOTES

TBWA offer coaching accreditation. It is a half day course and is really informative. If you would like to attend this please let me know and I will arrange it through the club.

Please read and get to know the rules of Tee-Ball to help you understand the game. Refer also to the Carine Cats Ball Club Tee-Ball Division Umpires Booklet for great tips and any local rules.

From the start of the 2018/19 season the following new rules have been introduced:

### U7 CLUB RULE CHANGES

- NO scoring
- Do NOT take a base on a pass ball. You can still call a pass ball and then play stops. This is to try and encourage kids to make the out at first on the throw.
- No strikes

### U9 CLUB RULE CHANGES

- Removed the batting arc
- Strike rule will remain in place, no strikes until after Christmas

Refer to <https://www.tbawa.com.au/about/for-umpires/training-and-accreditation/> for the official rule book (that you can download) and the Level 1 Umpire Video that will give you an understanding of the rules in play.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Coaching is a continual learning endeavor so I would encourage you to talk to other coaches, watch how other coaches train and drill their teams (take the good, leave the bad), look at the many resources on the web (some links will follow to get you started) and talk to your kids and older players. They are a great resource!

Please remember that coaches are teachers and role models - we want to develop not just good players, but good people. Sport gives us the opportunity to accept a lot of challenges and to overcome them, or to learn from them. Think about what you say to the kids because they will remember what you say, and how you say it, and they want to make sure you have their best interests at heart. Be yourself, develop your own style and have fun! The more fun you have, the more fun the kids will have.

Please try to keep your sense of humour, and your patience. You will find many trying times as a coach, but remember that we are there to help the kids, and that we are the adults. We want our sport to be a positive experience for both the kids, and their families, and also the coaches, and want the kids to look forward to playing or training with their mates at any chance they get.

Thank you for your efforts and your time. I hope you have a great experience coaching and enjoy the opportunity to spend this time with your children and getting to know their friends.



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## LINKS

Please find below a series of links to get you started. I do not recommend everything in these videos, but I think they all offer some really good examples of technique. You will find that in a team you will have many variations of techniques that are unique to the individual. The following links will give you a starting point to a wide range of resources that you may be able to use in different scenarios with your players.

TBAWA:

<http://www.tbawa.com.au/> - Tee-Ball Association of Western Australia

Fielding Drills:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t\\_Krz-SjRzo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_Krz-SjRzo) - Warriors Infield Drills - Youth Baseball Instruction  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfgSNwFVv1s> - Ripken Baseball Fielding Tip - Fielding a Ground Ball  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oG6gQe2gXUk> - How to: Field a Ground Ball | Baseball Fielding Tips  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7\\_mciKbLRo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7_mciKbLRo) - Simple & Easy Baseball Fielding Drills for Kids  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Jgo7ngPmw> - 3 Simple Tips To Become A Dominant Infielder  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9tIZjZHtc> - The "Big 5" Must Know Infield Drills - By Coach Mongero  
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=mP8V17j-yH4> - Infielders - How To Improve Your Hands (Simple & Effective Ways)  
<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=duJysUUo5zs#> - Extreme Baseball Infield Drills-Major League Fundamentals  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xO6tTxEADLw> - Fielding Drills, Everyday Drills (Short Hop / Long Hop)

Throwing Technique:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5PbsQ3g33YQ> - Learning How to Throw the Baseball Correctly (7 & 8 year olds)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHRU973uu2c> - How to Throw a Baseball - Baseball Throwing Mechanics  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmFSIUWnAEI> - Baseball Throwing Progression Drills  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-IS351mEkQ> - Youth Baseball Throwing Drills  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e\\_zWCRbrV1Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_zWCRbrV1Y) - Throwing Instruction and Drills

Catching Technique:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hu-qaaVLmNo> - Coaching Youth Baseball Catching Drills & Skills

Hitting Drills:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nO3PKSAdUSw> - Beginners Guide to Hitting  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tsZGog9xn5Y> - How to Improve your Hitting with Baseball Pro Tony Gwynn  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=keVyBnlHqCo> - Baseball Hitting Mechanics (Simplified)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Akyk8BEZ8OI> - The 7 Steps to the Perfect Baseball Swing  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRBkJwBrENM> - Load and Separation  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouMN8MvgIgc> - Drills you can do yourself  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AULUYL79maM> - Yankees Hitting Coach Gives 3 Tips to Perfect Your Swing  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mn58aE-421M> - 3 Drills To Help You Hit A Baseball With More Power  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HA5Tbmtpv0> - Load and Body Movement  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IC-Obo5miD8> - Robinson Cano Drill

Coaching Resources:

<http://changingthegameproject.com/category/podcast/> - Interviews with leading coaches and athletes about youth coaching, player development and making sure kids have fun, no matter the level of their play.

Motivation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7QL6hjeNDA> - Motivational Speech By Navy Seal Admiral William H. McRaven