



How to Run a Softball Team



PRE TEAM MEETING

After the draft or team selection, notify the parents of the team. Do so in a timely manner to reduce parents contacting the league. Contact can be by phone or email.

Set up a team communication system. Email, Team Sideline, Shutterfly or Team Snap for example. Have a system in place to have regular and emergency communication.

Before the first meeting plan your team expenses. Make sure you are familiar with the league uniform procedures. Know what your league provides and what the parents will need to get themselves. Will there be any equipment costs? Will you have a team banner, pennant, or flag? Do you want to use an indoor facility for wet days? Will the team have an end of the season party? Think out the season and plan for the costs and present to parents at the first meeting.

Most leagues have opening ceremonies. Know what your team is expected to wear. Many teams will have special socks, air bows, sweatshirts or even be in costume for the event. Go over this at first team meeting.

Have a game plan! That includes your team goals. Make sure you have mapped out by structuring practice and games to help maximize end of season goal accomplishment. Have a plan/philosophy and follow through on your plan. This should be discussed at the team meeting at beginning of the season.

Have rules/plan for things like practice attendance, game attendance, and behavior. Have each parent sign a the Parent Code of Conduct. Have plan/rules for games and practice for equipment responsibility, eating/drinking, and parents in or around the dugout.

Plan for practice. Making sure you have considered rain, cold, darkness and school events. A practice schedule needs to be in place prior to team meeting. Plan your practices ahead of time using the web site so the practices can be efficient and effective.

Sportsmanship is the most important lesson to teach the kids. The softball skills they learn will help them while they are playing but learning how to be a good sport, a good teammate, learning to be responsible for being punctual, keeping track of personal and team equipment, learning to pick up after game and practice are skills they will carry with them forever.

TEAM MEETING

Team/parent meeting. Hold this meeting prior to first practice. Depending on the age of the girls structure the meeting to accommodate the players. Younger kids will need an activity to keep busy while you go over the season's information with the parents. Some ideas can be to have the girls decorate dugout tubs, bag tags, practice t-shirts etc. Go over the season with the parents. Practice schedule, rules/expectations, goal for the season, sportsmanship, expenses, parent duties, snack schedule, team party, awards and needed equipment. Have a handout of the information presented at meeting in writing for parents to take home.

Choose a coaching staff and parent helpers. Establish clear and precise job descriptions for team jobs. Make sure all league rules are followed when adding assistance such as background checks or required applications. Some of these selections can be made prior to the first team meeting but plan on getting the rest of the jobs/duties filled at this meeting. Potential duties: Field prep, snack coordinator, picture coordinator, banner coordinator, end of season team party coordinator, etc.

Field prep is often a duty that a team is expected to do before each game. Assign parents to take on that responsibility at the team meeting. Find out league procedure for field prep and know what your responsibilities are if you are home or visitor.

POST TEAM MEETING

Have a dugout system. Where do you want the girls to place their equipment, bags, helmets, bats and water bottles? Are you going to allow parents and siblings in or around the dugout?

Game Days. Be prepared ahead of time. Have a line up and player rotation planned, adjustments often need to be made at game but it is easier to make small adjustments than to try and making the entire plan right before the game. When making a line up keep in mind a recreational approach to position rotation. Have a philosophy on how you will give girls playing/position time at games. Keep track and keep true to the philosophy you established at the first team meeting.

After game snack is something the kids count on and are often the greatest highlights of the game for them. After you get the game schedule divide snack up amongst the families. Today we have many dietary issues, allergies, gluten, sugar, vegan and the list goes on and on. Make a plan at the team meeting and follow through when making the snack schedule.

Team pictures are often provided by the league. Expect to have to schedule your picture time slot. Have a team plan in place to make pictures go as smoothly as possible. You can't take a team picture that includes everyone unless the entire team is present. Plan ahead and things will go smoothly.

Softball is a game that is full of dugout cheer, chant, stomp and clap. Be prepared to look up cheers on the internet. You can bring in a high school or older player from the league and learn and practice new cheers. Cheering is another great highlight of the game!

End of season party. Have a plan in place at the first team meeting. I try really hard to have the party immediately following the last game. This can be a challenge. You typically don't get game schedule until mid practice season. Some teams have an end of the season tournament making it hard to actually know when you last game will take place. If you know when your last game is scheduled get a reservation ASAP. If you won't know when your last game will take place plan a party as close as possible to the last potential game. If you wait too long after last game you will lose the kids to other activities. The league will often provide a trophy, medal or certificate. Find out league policy, do they give everyone something or only first and second place teams. If you would like to present your girls with something at the end of the season, it doesn't have to be a trophy, team t-shirts or sweatshirts are great. Have a plan for awards, end of season speech and gifts for coaches' assistant coach or special parent volunteers.

If your players have league issued equipment plan on collecting it at the last game. You can get any outstanding equipment at the end of season team party.

Equipment Players and Teams Will Need

Player

Encourage all of your players to get their own helmet. Helmets are personal safety equipment. A helmet should fit correctly and head lice can be spread sharing helmets. Most leagues will issue helmets if needed. Most leagues will give you bats with your league issued equipment. Many of the girls will come with their own bat. You may be asked by parents how to choose a bat for their daughter. When asked make sure to tell them to get a "softball" not a "hardball" bat. The girl should be able to lift the bat without strain with arm strait to shoulder height. For recreation softball tell the parents that spending money on an expensive bat isn't necessary. Every girl will need a good fitting glove and cleats.

Team

The team will need balls, wiffle balls, cones and nets. Agility ladders, hula hoops, tennis balls, and soft hands mitt are recommended as well. The dugout will need line up sheets and a line up board, a first aid /emergency kit. Be sure to have bags for ice and large bandages for sliding injuries. Include sunscreen, bug spray, hair ties and pens/pencils/wipe off markers. Wet wipes and hand sanitizer are also great to have. If you have girls over 10, feminine hygiene products are good to keep on hand.