

# Byfield-Newbury Little League Single A

## Guide for Coaches

**Introduction:** Byfield-Newbury thanks you for volunteering to coach in our league. We are an all-volunteer organization, so we deeply appreciate the efforts of each person involved. Single A is one step above our introductory level of play and, therefore, your efforts in providing a fun learning experience are very important both to the player's enjoyment of this season and to the continued success of our league.

**General:** Typically for 1st graders SINGLE A is a coach-pitched level of play for beginning players. Basic skills such as throwing, catching and batting stance are taught. Games are played only against teams with similar skill level and scores are not recorded. An emphasis on having fun and learning the game is promoted at this level. Teams meet one to two times a week for short practice/warm-ups followed by a game against Rowley, Salisbury or other Byfield-Newbury teams. Our home field is at the Newbury Upper Green baseball diamond. The travel is kept to a minimum. You will be scheduled away a few games a season at Rowley or Salisbury, and in turn, they will travel to the Upper Green to play in games with Byfield-Newbury.

Coaching at this level is fun and rewarding but presents some challenges. Most of the players (generally first graders) have little experience with baseball (having, at most, played in Tee Ball previously). Therefore, coaching should focus on basic skills (throwing over-hand, catching with a glove, batter's stance) and the continued development of rules of the game. Paying attention for a full hour of practice or game is still a challenge at this level. It will help if you enlist 2-3 other parents from your team to assist with your efforts.

**Logistics/Games:** All home games are played at the Upper Green in Newbury with some away games in Salisbury or Rowley. "Games" start at 5:45 and we recommend going no longer than an hour and a half. At the start of each game night, you should practice with your own team. Get with the other coach and determine who will take infield practice first. The other team can then warm up in the outfield until the first team is finished in the infield. Then the teams can switch from infield to outfield. Once you have finished this warmup practice, the two teams should go to their respective dugouts and get assignments from the coaches for positions/batting orders and the "game" can begin. A "game" consists of a controlled scrimmage between the teams of 4-5 innings. Coaches can (and should) take the field with their players to provide constant instruction on stance, where to throw a ball, etc. Coaches pitch to the players (pitching can be from the mound, from a knee, or even underhanded as necessary for the skill level of a particular player). There is a 6 swing max per at-bat before a Tee is used (**After the first 5 games, Tees are no longer used, and a player is out after 6 swings**). An inning is over after three outs, or five runs scored. Calls are made by the coaches on whether an out is scored, there are no umpires at this level. Whether to allow a player to advance more than one base after a hit to the outfield is also up to the coaches as the season progresses. Extra bases

should not be taken due to errors by infielders (i.e. passed balls at first base). There is no stealing or leading at this level.

**Rainouts/Cancellations/Postponements:** If there is inclement weather of any kind (rain, cold etc.) that the coaches feel would interfere with the players' enjoyment of a game on any particular night, we suggest you cancel the game by 3 p.m. on the day of the game. To do so, the coaches who are playing one another should simply be in touch by email or phone and make the decision to cancel or postpone. Single A shares the Upper Green with T Ball and Double A so please contact the board or refer to the schedule before choosing a make-up date.

**Practices:** Teams are permitted to have practices independent of the game nights listed on the schedule but are not required to do so. This is your call as a coach. In the past, most teams have had an initial practice or two prior to the first official game to introduce yourself and to hand out uniforms, etc. If possible, this is recommended so that the players have their uniforms prior to their first game. In general, most teams at Single A have a couple practices once the season starts. To schedule a practice, you should consult with the schedule to make sure the field is available. There is a small baseball field at NES that may be available for usage if you contact the league. The back area of the upper green is also available and does not need to be reserved.

**Conclusion:** Single A - coach pitch is a great experience for the players, coaches and parents and sets the stage for future success in the game. We appreciate your time and efforts. Please let us know if you have further comments or questions and/or if you have any issues throughout the season. We also suggest you refer to the attached "Tips for Coaching" and check out the YouTube links provided on the website for drill suggestions.

Thank you!

## **Tips for Coaching:**

- Enlist as many parents as possible to help coach (or even just help organize and keep order in the dugout during games).
- Prepare an outline of drills you intend to do prior to each game/practice.
- Coaches (and hopefully your assistants) should arrive 10 minutes early to set up the practice or game.
- Coach basic fundamentals and try to keep it fun for the kids.

**Throwing:** A basic goal for the season is to have all players be able to throw overhand by the end of the season. Many of the players will throw without a follow-through or will still want to throw underhand as they have done so from an early age.

**Catching:** As with throwing, many children learn to catch “underhanded” at an early age and will continue to do so even with a glove on their hand. Enforce the skill of “overhand” catching whenever a ball is thrown to a player above their waistline. This is important for development of the player in general but also is a safety issue. Players who attempt to catch a ball “underhanded” that is thrown above their waist will often have the ball deflect off the heel of the glove and upwards toward their face. If they turn the glove upward (catch “overhanded”) these deflections toward the face are eliminated.

**Hitting:** Safety first! Only one player should hold a bat at a time. There should be no practice swings, ever, outside of the coaches’ direct instruction. No practice swings in the on-deck circle! A batter must always have a helmet on when holding a bat. Hitting properly – particularly from a pitcher – will be initially difficult for most players at this age and will be a challenge to coach. Proper hitting technique will require the children to work with their parents at home. Encourage the players to do so. You can work on the basics at your practices and in your games to improve this skill by year end. There are a number of good YouTube videos on the topic that are easy to access and we suggest you do so prior to the start of the season. The very basics of coaching how to hit at this level are as follows:

1. right handed batters should have their left hand on the bottom of their grip of the bat and their right hand on top (and vice versa for lefties)
2. the hands should be touching, not spread apart
3. feet should be approximately shoulder width apart with knees bent in an athletic position with weight back on right for a right handed batter and left for a left handed batter
4. when in the batter’s box getting ready to hit from the Tee, the bat should be raised to a position by the ear (we often tell batters to act like they are holding/listening to a cell phone)
5. if the bottom of the bat were a flashlight, the light should be shining directly into the opposite batter’s box from where the batter is standing
6. the swing should be directly down toward the ball on the Tee and follow straight through the ball (batters should not try to “get under” the ball to hit the ball in the air).

**Fielding:** Goals for the season should include learning to field a ground ball, learning to play your own area in the infield (i.e. not try to get balls that are hit to another player), and learning that after fielding a ground ball you should throw to first base. Teach the players the basics of having their glove on the ground when fielding a grounder and how to rotate to throw to first base. Teach the players how to catch a pop up.

**Rules:** In addition to the basic rules of baseball and the modified exceptions for Single A, it can be helpful to establish your own coach/team rules at the beginning of the year. Just a few about fun, safety and attention, reiterated throughout the year, can guide just enough repetitive structure for productive management of the group.