



COACHES TOOLKIT





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Dear Coach,

Congratulations and welcome to the OKC Dodgers Rookie League family!

We are so excited that you will be joining us as a coach for the 2020 Rookie League season and are confident that it will be a rewarding experience.

It's important that you know what to expect as we get ready to kick-off the season, so we wanted to pass along some details and next steps.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

1. You'll receive an email from Oklahoma City Parks & Recreation that includes your team roster, along with contact information for parents and guardians.
2. Preselect an ideal day of the week and time for your team's practice. It's usually best to have a date/time selected before contacting parents and adjusting from there if needed. This date, time, and location should be discussed with the Program Coordinator at OKC Parks & Recreation.
3. Spend an evening calling all of the parents and guardians on your team. You'll want to...
 - a. Introduce yourself as their son/daughter's head coach in the OKC Dodgers Rookie League.
 - b. Share with them when and where your first practice will be held.
 - c. Let them know that you'll be following up with an email to all parents and guardians with a link to your team's schedule.
 - d. Remind them of equipment they'll need to provide: glove, white baseball pants, shoes/cleats, socks. Also, let them know that hat, jersey, and belt (excluding 4U) will be provided by the league. Parents are encouraged to purchase helmets and/or bats for their player if





they so choose; each team will have limited helmets and bats to share.

e. Contact Cleats 4 Kids at info@cleatsforkids.org or (405) 418-4889 if you have a player in need of a pair of shoes or additional equipment.

f. Team jerseys will be delivered with team equipment and distributed by the coach at your first practice.

4. If there are any parents/guardians you are unable to speak with, leave a brief voicemail with your contact information and the first practice time and tell them that you'll follow-up with an email that includes the rest of the details.

Also enclosed in this packet, you will find a proposed practice plan and a handbook that includes information related to inclement weather, code of conduct, communication, and more.

If you're anything like us, you can't wait for the start of the season! We're grateful to have you on board and look forward to the work you'll do with your team this year.

See you on the field!





WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR FIRST PRACTICE

ARRIVE EARLY.

Make sure that you've informed all of your parents and guardians when and where the team's first practice will be held.

Arrive at the field early for your first practice. You may need to prepare equipment (assemble tee, unwrap baseballs, etc.) and will want a few extra minutes to make sure everything is ready. Additionally, it is best if you are there early in order to welcome your players and their parents as they arrive at the field.

GREET PLAYERS AND THEIR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Shake the hand of each player and their parent/guardian(s) as they arrive and introduce yourself as the coach of the team. Have everyone sit on the bleachers as they arrive so that you can address everyone at once prior to the start of your first practice. If this isn't possible (players arriving late, scattering when they get to the field), be sure to speak with the parents as a group at the end of practice.

You'll want to pass along any expectations regarding practice and games, such as a reminder of what time each practice will be held and when/where the first game will take place. Consider suggesting that your team arrive at least 15 minutes early to each scheduled game time so that players can warm-up and be prepared to start on time.

Also, find out the best way to communicate with your parents. It might be email, text message, or a messaging app such as GroupMe. It's best to come to a consensus as a group so that all communication flows through the same channel throughout the season.

If you don't already have assistant coaches identified, now is a good time to ask for any volunteers to help with practice and/or games. The younger the team is, the more coaches that will be needed.

BEGIN PRACTICE.





When all of your players have arrived, have them follow you onto the field and form a circle. Depending on age group, this is the best time to introduce each of the players to one another.

For younger players, have them go around in a circle and say their name and a favorite food, or animal, or color. For older players, it might just be their name what school they go to.

Then, begin practice using the recommended practice plan included with the Coaches Toolkit.

Following the first practice, encourage your team to think of some potential team names. Since all teams wear Dodgers uniforms, we'd like to be able to differentiate on schedules with creative team names. For younger teams, consider bringing a couple of ideas to practice to limit the choices that your players have. Be sure to send your team's name to the Program Coordinator at OKC Parks & Recreation so that it can be updated on the league schedule site.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR FIRST GAME

REMIND PARENTS OF GAME DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION 24-48 HOURS IN ADVANCE.

Use the communication method that was decided on by your team's parents/guardians and remind everyone of the date, time, and location of your first game between 24 and 48 hours prior to the game. Also, reiterate that you'd like them at the game 15 minutes prior to the scheduled start time.

GET YOUR BENCH ORGANIZED AND READY TO GO.

Once the team from the game preceding yours has cleared out of the bench space, lead your players into the area and begin to set-up and organize batting helmets and bats. If time permits, encourage your team to stretch/play catch in the outfield area nearest your dugout.

Designate jobs for your assistant coaches. For instance, for a 4U T-Ball team, there will need to be a coach (usually the head coach) near home plate to help players get ready to bat. There will also need to be a coach in the dugout making sure that the on-deck batter has a helmet and bat ready to go, and that the rest of the lineup is sitting in order on the bench and is waiting for their turn to bat. Ideally, there would be a parent/assistant coach at each base to help remind the players where to run when the ball is in play.





For older players, a coach to keep the bench and lineup organized and coaches at first and third base.

FOLLOWING THE GAME...

Get your players together in a quick huddle in front of or in the bench area. Tell them that they did a great job and pick out a specific skill or focus that you'd like to work on during your next practice. Remind them when practice will be next, and finish by putting your hands in the center and cheering for your team. (Example: "1...2...3...Goooo Dodgers!")

For the first game, consider bringing a small healthy snack such as granola bars and a healthy drink (bottled water or sports drink) for your players. If you desire, plan to pass around a sign-up sheet for each player's parent/guardian(s) to bring a healthy snack and drink following each game. This can be done electronically following the first game or via a sign-up sheet during/after the game.

If possible, remind parents after the game when the next practice is, and tell them that you can't wait to see them there!

WHAT TO EXPECT WITH INCLEMENT WEATHER

WEATHER COMMUNICATION TO COACHES.

Springtime in Oklahoma can throw a wrench in the best plans, but that's why we've made communicating weather concerns with your players and their parents and guardians a breeze.

Any decisions regarding weather and/or field conditions will be made by the OKC Parks & Recreation Site Coordinator or Recreation Program Coordinator. Even if there is rain in the forecast early in the week, no decisions will be made regarding potential postponements prior to Friday.

These decisions will be passed from OKC Parks & Recreation to each coach and should be passed from the coach to parents and guardians.





COMMUNICATE EARLY AND OFTEN.

If on the Monday of a game week there is rain in the forecast for the following weekend, you can expect that you'll have at least a couple of parents/guardians reach out and ask about Saturday's game.

We suggest that you respond with some version of, *"Yes, there is inclement weather in the forecast for the weekend but OKC Parks & Recreation won't make any decisions regarding games until at least Friday. They'll keep an eye on it and we'll be sure to communicate any news we receive."*

You may need to remind parents/guardians at your practice that week that weather communication will be passed down from OKC Parks & Recreation and typically will not come until Friday afternoon at the earliest, as every reasonable attempt will be made to play the game.





GENERAL COACHING TIPS

- Child safety is the most important aspect of any sport.
- Plan on having quick drills with many repetitions.
- Allow them water breaks whenever needed.
- Have a fun activity planned with each practice, either at the beginning or end.
- Arrive early and set out any materials you may be using that day.
- Incorporate every player in each drill and try to keep them busy at all times.
- Try to always remain positive, be patient, and remember, you are here for the kids!

STRETCHING EXERCISES

These should be done before every practice!

- Light jog to centerfield and back.
- Arms
 - Roll arms in a windmill type action, 10 times forward and 10 times backward.
 - Have players roll their hand around in a circular pattern to stretch their wrist. 10 times to the right and 10 to the left.
- Neck
 - Tuck your chin into your chest and reach your chin into the sky, holding each position for 10 seconds. Then, look left and right moving just your head, holding again for 10 seconds.
- Legs
 - Quadriceps – Stand straight up, bend one leg and hold your ankle or the top of your foot. Pull the bent leg until your heel is close to your bottom while maintaining a straight back. Use a wall or teammate to balance.
 - Hamstrings – In a sitting position, with your left leg straight, place your right foot on the inner left thigh. Bend your trunk forward (do not arch the back!). Do this for 10 seconds then switch legs.
 - Calves – In a sitting position with legs straight, pull your right toes towards your body with your hands. Hold for 10 seconds and then switch legs. If a player is not flexible enough to do this, you may need to assist them.

NOTE: This practice plan is not required to be used by coaches. This is just a general plan to help first time coaches or to give ideas on what to do for practice. As the coach, you get to decide what you will do each day.





PRACTICE #1

This practice should focus on the fundamentals of coach pitch. Take time to learn about the rules of the game. Make sure to discuss the safety rules regarding swinging a bat. Some of these key elements are: always keep two hands on the bat, never throw it, check your surroundings before swinging, and always wear a helmet when out of dugout and not in field.

First task: Meeting your team (5-10 minutes)

Go around and ask each player their names and repeat it back to them. Ask if they have played any baseball before and find out how excited they are to play this sport! Introduce yourself and your coaches and now you get to express your excitement for getting to coach a great team!

Second task: Stretching (8-10 minutes)

Follow the stretching guidelines listed or have a routine ready for them. Explain the importance of stretching and walk them through it the first few times.

Third task: Fielding 101 (10-15 minutes)

Go over the stance of fielding a ground ball (knees bent, glove on the ground between legs, throwing hand on top of glove and working on 'alligator chops'). Roll each player ground balls while they use this technique, giving verbal reminders to watch the ball in to the glove, keeping the glove down, etc.

Fourth task: Throwing 101 (10-15 minutes)

Start with showing them the 4-seam grip with 2 fingers on top of the ball and the thumb hiding underneath (many of their hands may not be large enough for this, in which case they may be forced to throw with 3 fingers on top or holding the ball in the palm of their hand). When they each understand their grip, practice throws. Players hold the ball in their throwing hand, (Step 1) pull the ball back behind their ear and point their glove at their target, (Step 2) as they throw, step with opposing foot and open shoulders. (Step 3) They release the ball to the target and let their arm continue to move to finish the circular motion.

After they understand the movement, have them pair up and throw the ball from 5-8 feet apart. Practice catching the ball with two hands. Assist any players having trouble.





Fifth task: Batting 101 (10 minutes)

Have the players line up on the foul line and mirror your movements. Make sure to spread the players out and follow safety precautions. Step 1: Hold the bat with dominate hand on top and other hand below, knuckles lined up. Step 2: Stand sideways and in line with the pitcher with feet slightly wider than shoulder width and knees bent. Step 3: Keep eyes on the ball and swing. Open your hips and turn your shoulders into it, keeping the bat level to the ground. Squash the bug on the back foot.

PRACTICE #2

First task: Warm up (15 minutes)

Follow the stretching guidelines listed or have a routine ready for them. Once the players are stretched and a little warm, go back over throwing a baseball. Remind them of the grip, the proper body movements, and how to play catch safely. During this time, walk around and observe the players. Watch their grip and movements and assist where needed.

Second task: Throwing in the field (20 minutes)

Begin by having the players line up in front of you with an assistant, parent, or player next to you catching in. Roll the ball to each player and have them throw it to your partner. Remind them of fielding cues and positions, grip, and how to throw. Once you have done this, you should have an idea of each players arm strength and fielding technique. You should be able to place players in positions by next practice (ask them where they want to play, make sure they enjoy their position and are having fun).

Third task: Hitting and Running (20 minutes)

Remind the players how to hold a bat, stance, and swing. Once you have reviewed this, have them line up and hit the ball off you pitching underhand (this is a great time to view the fundamentals). After hitting the ball, have them run to first base. Show them how to run through the base at first and how/when to round first base. When the next player hits, the first runner will go to second from first. This shows them where they need to go and when. Have half of your team standing in the field fielding ground balls and rolling them back towards you at the pitcher's mound.





PRACTICE #3

First task: Warm up (15 minutes)

Follow the stretching guidelines listed or have a routine ready for them. Once the players are stretched and a little warm, have them play catch, backing up as they get looser. During this time, walk around and observe the players. Watch their grip and movements and assist where needed.

Second task: Hitting the ball (10 minutes)

After hitting the ball, have them run to first base. When the next player hits, the first runner will go to second from first. Have each player go through this process.

Third task: Throwing the ball (10 minutes)

Put the players into positions and roll/softly hit them ground balls. Have them then throw the ball to first base from the infield, or second base from the outfield.

Fourth task: Putting it together (20-30 minutes)

Split the team in half, having half in the field and half hitting. Have the batters hit the ball and run to first, while the fielders try to get them out. This will be a game-like situation. Allow the whole lineup of batters to hit twice, then switch sides and let the other half hit. Repeat the process with the other half of the team.

PRACTICE #4

First task: Warm up (15 minutes)

Follow the stretching guidelines listed or have a routine ready for them. Once the players are stretched and a little warm, have them play catch, backing up as they get looser. During this time, walk around and observe the players. Watch their grip and movements and assist where needed.

Second task: Fielding and throwing (20 minutes)

Have the players go to their positions in the field. Softly hit or roll them ground balls. Be patient and help where you can. Help them with form and use verbal cues for assistance. Remind them to watch the ball into their glove. Have each infield player throw to each base for practice. Have outfielders throw to second base or third base.

Third task: Hitting for points

Set up markers (gloves, cones, hats, etc.) in consistent, equal increments away from home plate.





Each marker will be worth a certain number of points (1pt first marker, 2 second, etc.). The players will be working together, hitting 3 balls each. You will set a score goal (make it realistic and something they will likely accomplish) and they will work together to beat that score. This is a fun activity and allows you to watch their swing and assist where needed.

PRACTICE #5

First task: Warm up (15 minutes)

Follow the stretching guidelines listed or have a routine ready for them. Once the players are stretched and a little warm, have them play catch, backing up as they get looser. During this time, walk around and observe the players. Watch their grip and movements and assist where needed.

Second task: Batting practice with live fielding (45+ minutes)

At this point, players should have a good understanding of fundamentals and mechanics. Split the team up into groups of 3 or 4. Have one group hitting, the rest in the field. The group hitting will hit 8 balls each and will not run the bases. Even though they aren't running, the fielders will pretend that they are. Fielders will play it live and throw it to first base. After the play is over in the field, the batter will hit again. Repeat this process for each group, allowing everybody to hit and giving the fielders good practice.

This process should take up your whole practice. It will give the hitters plenty of swings and should allow fielders to practice ground balls, fly balls, and throwing in a live situation.

PRACTICE #6

First task: Warm up (15 minutes)

Follow the stretching guidelines listed or have a routine ready for them. Once the players are stretched and a little warm, have them play catch, backing up as they get looser. During this time, walk around and observe the players. Watch their grip and movements and assist where needed.

Second task: Fielding and throwing (20 minutes)

Have the players go to their positions in the field. Softly hit or roll them ground balls. Fielding is tough at this age, so be patient. Help them with form and use verbal cues for assistance. Remind them to watch the ball into their glove. Have each infield player throw to each base for practice. Have outfielders throw to second base or third base.





Third task: Batting and fielding (20-30 minutes)

Split the team in half, having half in the field and half hitting. Have the batters hit the ball and run to first, while the fielders try to get them out. This will be a game-like situation. Allow the whole lineup of batters to hit twice, then switch sides and let the other half hit. Repeat the process with the other half of the team.

(NOTE: At this point in the season, some of these drills might seem repetitive. Repetition is a huge part of players this age learning the fundamentals.)

PRACTICE #7

First task: Warm up (15 minutes)

Follow the stretching guidelines listed or have a routine ready for them. Once the players are stretched and a little warm, have them play catch, backing up as they get looser. During this time, walk around and observe the players. Watch their grip and movements and assist where needed.

Second task: Batting practice with live fielding (45+ minutes)

At this point, players should have a good understanding of fundamentals and mechanics. Split the team up into groups of 3 or 4. Have one group hitting, the rest in the field. The group hitting will hit 8 balls each and will not run the bases. Even though they aren't running, the fielders will pretend that they are. Fielders will play it live and throw it to first base. After the play is over in the field, the batter will hit again. Repeat this process for each group, allowing everybody to hit and giving the fielders good practice.

PRACTICE #8

First task: Warm up (15 minutes)

Follow the stretching guidelines listed or have a routine ready for them. Once the players are stretched and a little warm, have them play catch, backing up as they get looser. During this time, walk around and observe the players. Watch their grip and movements and assist where needed.

Second task: Scrimmage

Split the team evenly in half. They will do a full 5 inning scrimmage against each other. Have this be a fun but competitive activity. Since this may be your last practice of the season, a good idea would be to have a pizza party or post-practice celebration. Let the winning team from the scrimmage get their food first or have some sort of incentive for winning.





Third task: Talking with your players

Have a nice talk with your players and tell them how grateful and happy you are that you got to coach a great team! If you want to, you can have and assign awards to players. Go around and ask each player what their favorite part of the season was. Find out how much they enjoy baseball and get them excited for the last game of the season.





OKLAHOMA CITY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Parks and Recreation Department is to provide parks, recreational, and cultural services to the Oklahoma City residents and visitors so they can have improved health, wellness, and quality of life.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Youth Baseball League is aimed to give all participants, through involvement in practices and competitive games, the opportunity to learn and improve the fundamentals of baseball.

COACHES/COACHING STAFF

- The most important objective is the welfare of everyone's participation.
- Must have a rational amount of knowledge of the game of baseball.
- Will be an outstanding role model for leadership, sportsmanship, and overall good conduct to his/her team at all times.
- Will show importance of coaching on learning regulations, basic fundamentals, encourage participation, and personal growth.
- Each team may have a head coach and an assistant coach who are 18 years of age and older.

EQUIPMENT & UNIFORMS

- Uniforms will be given to each coach before the start of the season. The team is required to wear the given jerseys and hats. All teams must wear the uniforms to each game.
- Baserunners and batters are required to wear protective helmets all times during practices and games.
- Each team will provide the umpire with game balls prior to the start of the game.
- Players may not wear objects which may cause injury or give an artificial advantage to the player. No jewelry allowed. The head coach is responsible for ensuring that all players are compliant before stepping onto the field.
- Each player must provide their own glove; individual bats are optional.
- Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department will provide limited balls, bats, and helmets to each coach for use during practice and games. Additional equipment must be provided by the player.





GAME TIME

Games will start at their scheduled time, however if a team is late or does not have enough players to start, a 10-minute grace period will be allowed. A team must have 7 registered uniform players to start the game. The umpire's watch is official.

FORFEIT POLICY

A game will be considered a forfeit if a team has less than 7 legal players present on the field at game time and after the grace period is over.

WEATHER POLICY

The Site Coordinator or Recreation Program Coordinator has the final say on whether a game will be suspended or postponed due to weather conditions or poor field conditions. For the full weather policy please visit www.teamsideline.com/okc under downloads tab.

If thunder is heard or cloud to ground lightning is visible, the lightning is close enough to strike you. Please take shelter immediately, and the game will resume after 30 minutes with no lightning strikes.

REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME A COACH

- Perform a background check through the City of Oklahoma City.
- Obtain concussion training certification through the Heads Up program.
(<https://headsup.cdc.gov>)
- Enjoy teaching and helping children grow emotionally, physically, and socially.
- Basic knowledge of the sport of baseball.





COACHES' CODE OF CONDUCT

I hereby pledge to provide positive attitude and be responsible for my participation in Youth Sports by following this Code of Conduct.

- I will maintain good sportsmanship, regardless of win or loss.
- I will refrain from obscene, racist, sexist, or abusive language.
- I will place the emotional and physical well-being of my players ahead of my desire to win.
- I will treat each player as an individual, remembering the large range of emotional and physical development for the same age group.
- I will do my best to provide a safe playing environment for my players.
- I will promise to review and practice basic first aid principles needed to treat injuries of my players.
- I will do my best to organize practices that are fun and challenging for all my players.
- I will lead by example in demonstrating fair play and sportsmanship to all my players.
- I will provide a sports environment for my team that is free of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol, and I will refrain from their use at all youth sports events.
- I will be knowledgeable in the rules of each sport that I coach and I will teach these rules to my players.
- I will use those coaching techniques appropriate for all of the skill that I teach.
- I will remember that I am a youth sports coach and that the game is for children and not adults.





PLAYERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

I hereby pledge to provide positive attitude and be responsible for my participation in Youth Sports by following this Code of Conduct.

- I will demonstrate good sportsmanship to other players, coaches, officials, and parents at every game and practice.
- I will attend every practice and game that I possibly can, and will notify my coach if I cannot.
- I will expect to receive a fair amount of playing time.
- I will do my very best to listen and learn from my coaches.
- I will treat my coaches, other players, officials, and fans with respect, and expect to be treated the same.
- I deserve to have fun during my sports experience and will tell my parents or coaches if I am no longer having fun.
- I will encourage my parents to be involved with my team in some capacity because it's important to me.
- I will do my very best in school.
- I will remember that sports is an opportunity to learn and have fun!





COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

Communication and organization are the two most important aspects of a healthy coach-parent relationship. Keeping an open line of communication for the parents is essential. These are some tips for you as you begin your journey as a coach of a youth league:

- Contact parents as soon as you receive a roster, they will be eager to hear from you.
- Host a coach-parent team meeting
 - This can be done before or after the first practice.
 - Great opportunity to introduce yourself and put the parents' mind at ease knowing that their children will be taken care of by a great coach.
 - Ensure that you have the correct contact information for each parent.
 - You can communicate your expectations from the players and parents.
 - Stress the importance of having parents' participation.
 - Communicate the practice days, times, and locations.
- Always listen to their ideas and feelings. They are typically just concerned about their child.
- Express appreciation for their concern.
- Be fair and consistent to all players and parents.
- Do not discuss individual players with other parents.

In the case of a rainout, the City of Oklahoma City will contact coaches and parents. We recommend that you reach out to parents as well to ensure they received the message.





COMMUNICATING WITH UMPIRES

A coach can approach the umpire at any time to appeal a call and receive clarification. Once clarification is received, the coach must accept the decision and return to the dugout/coaching position. Any continuation of arguing can result in restriction to the dugout or expulsion from the game at the umpires' discretion.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct for coaches includes but is not limited to:

- Arguing with umpires or league officials after being instructed to return to their position.
- Leaving the dugout during a live ball.
- Taunting or communicating with the opposition in any way that can be perceived as negative.
- Engaging in inappropriate behavior or language.
- Calling "time" or use of any other words in an attempt to cause a pitcher to balk during a play.
- Being intoxicated or use of any illegal substance while coaching.

Penalty for Unsportsmanlike Conduct:

1st Offense: Warning or restriction to dugout

2nd Offense: Ejection from field of play and dugout

If unsportsmanlike conduct continues after this point, it will be dealt with by the league coordinator. It can result in further suspension from games, or expulsion from the league.





CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT

One of the main jobs of a youth sports coach is keeping athletes safe. This section contains information to help you protect athletes from concussion or other serious brain injury, learn how to spot a concussion and know what to do if a concussion occurs.

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury—or TBI— caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or by a hit to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. This fast movement can cause the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull, creating chemical changes in the brain and sometimes stretching and damaging the brain cells.

HOW CAN I KEEP ATHLETES SAFE?

Sports are a great way for children and teens to stay healthy and can help them do well in school. As a youth sports coach, your actions create the culture for safety and can help lower an athlete's chance of getting a concussion or other serious injury. Aggressive and/or unsportsmanlike behavior among athletes can increase their chances of getting a concussion or other serious injury. Here are some ways you can help keep your athletes safe:

Talk with athletes about the importance of reporting a concussion:

- Talk with athletes about any concerns they might have about reporting their concussion symptoms. Make sure to tell them that safety comes first and you expect them to tell you and their parent(s) if they think they have a concussion.

Create a culture of safety at games and practices:

- Teach athletes ways to lower the chances of getting a concussion.
- Enforce the rules of the sport for fair play, safety, and sportsmanship.
- Ensure athletes avoid unsafe actions such as:
 - Striking another athlete in the head;
 - Using their head or helmet to contact another athlete;
 - Making illegal contacts or checking, tackling, or colliding with an unprotected opponent; and/or
 - Trying to injure or put another athlete at risk for injury.





- Tell athletes that you expect good sportsmanship at all times, both on and off the playing field.

Keep up-to-date on concussion information:

- Review your state, league, and/or organization's concussion guidelines and protocols.
- Take a training course on concussion. CDC offers concussion training at no cost at www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP.
- Download CDC's HEADS UP app or a list of concussion signs and symptoms that you can keep on hand.

Check out the equipment and sports facilities:

- Make sure all athletes wear a helmet that fits well and is in good condition when appropriate for the sport or activity. There is no "concussion-proof" helmet, so it is important to enforce safety rules that protect athletes from hits to the head and when a helmet falls off during a play.
- Work with the game or event administrator to remove tripping hazards and ensure that equipment, such as goalposts, have padding that is in good condition.

Keep emergency contact information handy:

- Bring emergency contact information for parents and health care providers to each game and practice in case an athlete needs to be taken to an emergency department right away for a concussion or other serious injury.
- If first responders are called to care for an injured athlete, provide them with details about how the injury happened and how the athlete was acting after the injury.

HOW CAN I SPOT A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION?

Athletes who show or report one or more of the signs and symptoms listed below—or simply say they just "don't feel right" after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body—may have a concussion or other serious brain injury.

SIGNS OBSERVED BY COACHES OR PARENTS:

- Appears dazed or stunned.
- Forgets an instruction, is confused about an assignment or position, or is unsure of the game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily.
- Answers questions slowly.





- Loses consciousness (even briefly).
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes.
- Can't recall events prior to or after a hit or fall.

SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETES:

- Headache or "pressure" in head.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Balance problems or dizziness, or double or blurry vision.
- Bothered by light or noise.
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy.
- Confusion, or concentration or memory problems.
- Just not "feeling right", or "feeling down".

NOTE: Concussion signs and symptoms often show up soon after the injury, but it can be hard to tell how serious the concussion is at first. Some symptoms may not be noticed or may not show up for hours or days.

WHAT ARE SOME MORE SERIOUS DANGER SIGNS TO LOOK FOR?

In rare cases, a dangerous collection of blood (hematoma) may form on the brain after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body and can squeeze the brain against the skull. Call 9-1-1 or ensure an athlete is taken to the emergency department right away if, after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, he or she has one or more of these danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other.
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up.
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away.
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination.
- Repeated vomiting or nausea, convulsions or seizures (shaking or twitching).
- Unusual behavior, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation.
- Loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out). Even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously.





CONCUSSIONS AFFECT EACH ATHLETE DIFFERENTLY.

While most athletes with a concussion feel better within a couple of weeks, some will have symptoms for months or longer. Talk with an athlete's parents if you notice their concussion symptoms come back after they return to play.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK AN ATHLETE HAS A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION?

As a coach, if you think an athlete may have a concussion, you should:

REMOVE THE ATHLETE FROM PLAY.

When in doubt, sit them out!

KEEP AN ATHLETE WITH A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION OUT OF PLAY ON THE SAME DAY OF THE INJURY AND UNTIL CLEARED BY A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER.

Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Only a health care provider should assess an athlete for a possible concussion. After you remove an athlete with a possible concussion from practice or play, the decision about return to practice or play is a medical decision that should be made by a health care provider. As a coach, recording the following information can help a health care provider in assessing the athlete after the injury:

- Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head or body.
- Any loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out) and if so, for how long.
- Any memory loss right after the injury.
- Any seizures right after the injury.
- Number of previous concussions (if any).

INFORM THE ATHLETE'S PARENT(S) ABOUT THE POSSIBLE CONCUSSION.

Let them know about the possible concussion and give them the HEADS UP fact sheet for parents. This fact sheet can help parents watch the athlete for concussion signs or symptoms that may show up or get worse once the athlete is at home or returns to school.

ASK FOR WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE ATHLETE'S HEALTH CARE PROVIDER ON RETURN TO PLAY.

These instructions should include information about when they can return to play and what steps you should take to help them safely return to play.





WHY SHOULD I REMOVE AN ATHLETE WITH A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION FROM PLAY?

The brain needs time to heal after a concussion. An athlete who continues to play with concussion has a greater chance of getting another concussion. A repeat concussion that occurs while the brain is still healing from the first injury can be very serious and can affect an athlete for a lifetime. It can even be fatal.

SOME ATHLETES MAY NOT REPORT A CONCUSSION BECAUSE THEY DON'T THINK A CONCUSSION IS SERIOUS.

They may also worry about:

- Losing their position on the team or during the game.
- Jeopardizing their future sports career.
- Looking weak.
- Letting their teammates or the team down.
- What their coach or teammates might think of them.

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO HELP AN ATHLETE RETURN TO PLAY?

An athlete's return to school and sports should be a gradual process that is approved and carefully managed and monitored by a health care provider. When available, be sure to also work closely with your team's certified athletic trainer.

Below are five gradual steps that you, along with a health care provider, should follow to help safely return an athlete to play. Remember, this is a gradual process. These steps should not be completed in one day, but instead over days, weeks, or months.

BASELINE: Athlete is back to their regular school activities, is no longer experiencing symptoms from the injury when doing normal activities, and has a green light from their health care provider to begin the return to play process.

An athlete should only move to the next step if they do not have any new symptoms at the current step.

STEP 1: Begin with light aerobic exercise only to increase an athlete's heart rate. This means about 5 to 10 minutes on an exercise bike, walking, or light jogging. No weightlifting at this point.





STEP 2: Continue with activities to increase an athlete's heart rate with body or head movement. This includes moderate jogging, brief running, moderate-intensity stationary biking, moderate-intensity weightlifting (less time and/or less weight than a typical routine).

STEP 3: Add heavy non-contact physical activity, such as sprinting/ running, high-intensity stationary biking, regular weightlifting routine, non-contact sport-specific drills (in 3 planes of movement).

STEP 4: An athlete may return to practice and full contact (if appropriate for the sport) in controlled practice.

STEP 5: An athlete may return to competition.

REMEMBER: It is important for you and the athlete's parent(s) to watch for concussion symptoms after each day's return to play progression activity. If an athlete's concussion symptoms come back, or he or she gets new symptoms when becoming more active at any step, this is a sign that the athlete is pushing him- or herself too hard. The athlete should stop these activities, and the athlete's health care provider should be contacted. After the okay from the athlete's health care provider, the athlete can begin at the previous step.

Join the conversation at www.facebook.com/CDCHEADSUP

To learn more go to cdc.gov/HEADSUP

Content Source: CDC's HEADS UP campaign. Customizable HEADS UP fact sheets were made possible through a grant to the CDC Foundation from the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE).



**OKC DODGERS ROOKIE LEAGUE
COACHES TOOLKIT**



HEAT ILLNESS MANAGEMENT

HEAT STROKE

What to look for

- High body temperature (103°F or higher)
- Hot, red, dry or damp skin
- Fast, strong pulse
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Losing consciousness (passing out)

What to do

- Call 911 right away
- heat stroke is a medical emergency
- Move the person to a cooler place
- Help lower the person's temperature with cool cloths or a cool bath
- Do not give the person anything to drink

HEAT EXHAUSTION

What to look for

- Heavy sweating
- Cold, pale and clammy skin
- Fast, weak pulse
- Nausea or vomiting
- Muscle cramps
- Tiredness or weakness
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Fainting (passing out)

What to do

- Move the person to a cool place
- Loosen the person's clothes
- Put cool, wet cloths on the person's body or take a cool bath
- Sip water

Get medical help right away if

- The person is throwing up
- Symptoms get worse
- Symptoms last longer than 1 hour

HEAT CRAMPS

What to look for

- Heavy sweating during intense exercise
- Muscle pain or spasms

What to do

- Stop physical activity and move to a cool place
- Drink water or a sports drink
- Wait for cramps to go away before the person does any more physical activity

Get medical help right away if

- Cramps last longer than 1 hour
- The person is on a low-sodium diet
- The person has heart problems





RESOURCES

IN ADDITION TO THIS TOOLKIT, HERE ARE SOME RELATED RESOURCES THAT MIGHT BE HELPFUL IN YOUR COACHING PLAN.

coachforamerica.com
playworks.org/games
rachelschallenge.org
ripkenquickball.com
scaresearch.org
whytry.org
Baseball Force Out Teacher App

CONNECT WITH US

YOU ARE ON THE FRONT LINES OF EMPOWERING KIDS IN YOUR COMMUNITY EACH AND EVERY DAY. WE'D LOVE TO HEAR HOW THE OKC DODGERS ROOKIE LEAGUE IS IMPACTING YOUR COMMUNITY!

Visit our website to learn more: www.okcdodgers.com/rookieleague

JOIN THE CONVERSATION BY CONNECTING WITH OKC PARKS AND RECREATION AND THE OKLAHOMA CITY DODGERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

Oklahoma City Dodgers

Facebook: @OKCDodgers
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Twitter: @okc_dodgers

OKC Parks and Recreation

Facebook: @OKCParks
Instagram: @okcparks
Twitter: @okcparks

THANK YOU FOR ALL THAT YOU DO AS A VOLUNTEER COACH. THE OKC DODGERS ROOKIE LEAGUE WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOU!





COACHES TOOLKIT



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