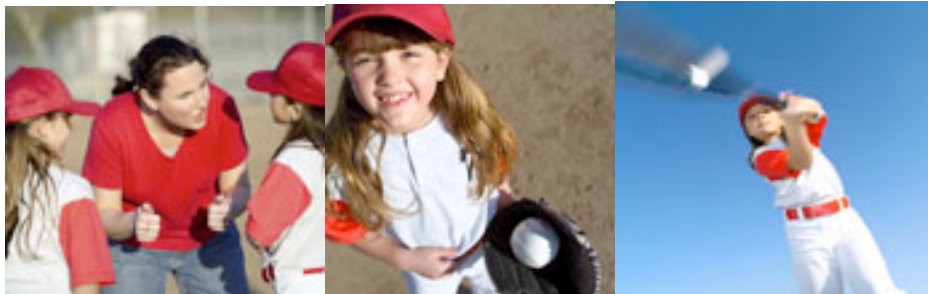


# **GIRLS SOFTBALL LEAGUE OF WESTFIELD**

## **KINDERGARTEN/FIRST GRADE INSTRUCTIONAL LEAGUE**

### **2009 COACH'S MANUAL**



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[www.WestfieldSoftball.org](http://www.WestfieldSoftball.org)

## **SEASON OVERVIEW**

The K/1 GSLW League is an instructional TEE Ball league that will be teaching players the basic fundamentals, rules and the fun and excitement of the sport. Your early practices will probably be spent just introducing the basics of the game (including field positions, scoring and even which way to 1<sup>st</sup> base and where do they go from there!)

The first Saturday practice time slot will be assigned on April 18. Beginning the week of April 13<sup>th</sup>, teams will be expected to practice one weeknight/week (1 hour and 15 minutes) throughout the season. Managers will be assigned a weeknight practice slot from the Instructional League Director after reviewing requested choices. Managers will also be assigned specific time slots on Saturday April 18 & 25 (also one hour and 15 minutes) for the fields at either Franklin or McKinley. This will be a rotating time each week to try to accommodate the ongoing conflicts coaches and players may have (i.e.; Ballet class every Saturday morning at 10 AM). Once assigned, coaches may swap amongst each other if need be to tailor to more specific needs. A complete list of all Team #'s/Mangers/Asst. Managers and all contact information will be emailed to you.

This 2009 in town season, the GSLW will be introducing one-hour clinics put on by the WHS coaches and players on Sundays, April 19 & 26. The Instructional League Director will coordinate with all K/1 coaches to designate the time slot for you team for these two days of clinics.

Beginning Saturday, May 2, we will begin a "mini season" of 6 games when 1 1/2 hour time slots will be given to 2 teams. The first 30 minutes the teams will share the field for practice and then the last hour will be a "game" (3 innings). The entire batting order will bat once and then switch sides. Should a team secure 3 outs prior to the entire batting order batting, bases should be cleared but the batting order should bat through. There will be no scores or records kept and each game will be played to a "tie" and "everybody's a winner." Approximately mid-way in our "mini-season" we will begin to introduce live pitching (Coach pitches) in the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning of each game.

A catcher is not required in the K/1 league and you may position 2 players as "pitcher"; one to the left and one to the right of the pitching mound.

For every practice and schedule, you should keep the following 3 goals in mind:

- **SAFETY!**
- **HAVE FUN!**
- **SMALL GAINS IN IMPROVEMENT ARE BIG STEPS!**

### **SAFETY!**

Many of these players will be seeing a softball field, glove, ball and bat for the first time and safety instruction should be a priority from Day #1. Please always be cognizant of the following guidelines:

-Bats may only be handled in the batter's box during the players turn at bat in a drill or game. You will be reminding players many times during the season of this and better to sound like a broken record then to have to deal with an injury. All other players should remain behind the backstop for a game or at least 15 feet away from a batter in a drill.

-Batter's helmets with face-masks required for all batters and runners on base.

-Always carry your league issued medical emergency kit and ice packs to practices and games. **You will require it** at some point during your season.

-During drills and pre-game warm-ups, be aware of spacing and be sure they are always spaced far enough apart. More injuries occur during this segment of the game than any other.

-Identify your "bat tossers" (and every team will have one) and begin instruction and correction immediately. This is the ideal age to attempt to correct this problem since there will be no catcher or umpire for them to injure.

-Medical forms which will be emailed to coaches to route to their team rosters (and are available for download on [www.WestfieldSoftball.org](http://www.WestfieldSoftball.org)) must be completed, signed and returned before any player steps foot on the field. There is no exclusion to this rule and this is not only for the league's protection, but your protection as well. These forms will also contain information on emergency contact for parents, so have them with you at all times!

-At your first practice and while parents are still in attendance (or in your introductory letter to parents requesting a response) do a check on any and all allergies (bee stings, food etc.) and inquire if any child carries an EpiPen and where it will be stored.

-Make sure that there is a cell phone at the fields at all times to call for help in the event of an emergency. If there is even the slightest question in your mind on whether emergency professional help should be notified, then make the call! The motto here is better safe than sorry.

-As the warmer weather approaches, encourage players to drink plenty of water.

-If during the season a player is becoming a disturbance and affecting safety (and after attempts to deal with the child on your own have failed) the manager is encouraged to speak directly with the parent. Explain the behavior, how it is disturbing the team and most importantly, how it is jeopardizing the safety of the other players.

-Unlike Memorial and Tamaques Parks, the fields the K/1 league will be practicing and playing their games at McKinley and Franklin schools **DO NOT HAVE LIGHTENING ALARMS!** If any storm at all appears to be blowing in—remove players from field immediately and cancel the remainder of the practice/game. It's simply not worth the risk.

## **HAVE FUN!**

-This age group has a limited attention span and must be constantly engaged and on the move to prevent boredom (softball by nature is a slow moving game).

-But this is the age though that we will hook them on the sport for years to come, so we must provide a fun, lively atmosphere to keep their interest and return.

-Practices are the opportunity to establish several drill stations at once that 3-4 players rotate through every 5 minutes or so. Enlist the assistance of any parent/older sibling etc. willing to help (and properly explain to them the purpose of the drill).

-Drills do not always have to have a bat, ball and glove (some drill examples will be included at the end of this document and hopefully some more ideas will be given to us at the Coaches Clinic at WHS).

-If you have a battery operated CD player bring it with a CD or 2 of kid's songs. Music always makes things a little livelier and one possibility you may want to consider is have players "switch" drill stations between songs to keep things lively and fast paced.

-Conclude every practice with a sing-a-long of 'Take me out to the ball game" (words are included in the drill section). Print out copies and hand out at your first practice as a homework assignment for players and parents to learn the words for the next practice.

## **SMALL GAINS IN IMPROVEMENT ARE BIG STEPS!**

-Stress the positive ALWAYS! At the conclusion of every practice and game, remind them what they did well and new things that they couldn't do in the previous get-together.

-When instructing, try to remember to speak to the kid's level. Remember that this is the first time many of these kids are stepping onto a softball field. They may not understand all of the "lingo" yet. Also remember that you are probably an intimidating figure for them. One suggestion is to get down on one knee and calmly speak to them directly when giving specific instructions.

-Children this age will also need to see something visually to be able to understand what you are trying to have them do; **demonstrate everything!**

-Teach continuously and keep the chatter going non-stop. Learning softball skills properly requires repetition, so tell them again, again and again.

-Managers are encouraged to establish an ongoing communication via email with parents highlighting improvements and keeping them abreast of upcoming schedules.

## **OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST**

### **EQUIPMENT**

The GSLW will provide an equipment bag (bat/bases/balls/TEE/batting helmets) that must be returned at the end of the season. Players will also be issued T-shirts and hats.

Special drills requiring other apparatus (listed with the drills at the end of this document) need to be supplied personally by team management.

Players are required to provide their own glove. Cleats are not required, but encouraged to have players become accustomed to running in them.

### **FIELD CONDITIONS**

If the town has CLOSED fields for the day, the practice/game must be postponed. The GSLW will post all field closing information as soon as it is known on their website, [www.WestfieldSoftball.org](http://www.WestfieldSoftball.org).

## **SOME SUGGESTED DRILLS**

It is essential Managers plan out their practices in advance to make the best use of your's and your player's time. Managers should also be flexible with alternative plans and drills should a drill not be working out with your team. What looked great on paper may just not work out with your particular group of players.

Lets also get all players in the habit now of stretching both before and after a practice and game. Spend 3-4 minutes at the start and completion of all practices and games.

In addition to the handouts of drills you will receive at the Coaches Clinic and any research you would like to conduct on your own on the web (and there are thousands of them!), following are some additional drills you may want to throw into the mix.

### **DRILL #1-Teach them the bases**

- 1) Have players swing the bat and run the bases. As they reach each base, have them call it out loud what base they are touching. This is also a great early way to identify your "bat tossers"

### **DRILL #2-Teach them positions**

- 1) Have the team sit as a group along the base line and raise their hands and name a position on the field. Then ask them to run to that position. Coaches should stand on the field to direct; in the beginning—you will need to do a lot of that.

### **DRILL #3-Throwing form: To teach proper form when throwing**

- 1) Set a target for the player to throw to (another player, a point on the fence, a bucket, etc.)
- 2) Position player so that they are facing perpendicular to the target (left hand and left foot for right handed throwers should be closest to the target).
- 3) Have player raise their throwing arm behind them. Arm should be in shape of an "L". Bottom part of "L" should be parallel to ground. Ball should be facing away from player (so they can see their wristwatch if they were wearing one). Elbow on glove hand should point to target. Have player hold until your command.
- 4) Player raises left foot (right foot for left handed throwers)
- 5) Player steps to target (point toes at target) and releases the ball. Release point should be in front of player's body. Throwing hand finishes at hip on opposite side

### **DRILL #4-Alligator drill: To teach fielding with two hands**

- 1) Roll ball (no bounce) lightly to player
- 2) Have players field ball with two hands (start this drill with no glove and "glove hand" should be on bottom (alligator mouth))
- 3) Increase speed of throw after player is doing it correctly.
- 4) Add glove to the exercise when mechanics are correct

#### **ADD TO THIS DRILL:**

-Take 3-4 of your shabbiest practice balls and with a permanent Sharpie marker—write large numbers in different colors on each ball.

-To teach them to keep an eye on the ball all the way into their glove, have them call out the color marked on the ball as it approaches them.

-As they get better—have them start calling out the number marked on the ball.

## **DRILL #5: Glove Open/Glove Closed: To Teach opening their gloves**

- 1) Have players raise hand with glove on one side
- 2) Have players open and squeeze closed glove repeatedly. Tell them to make the "glove talk."
- 3) Have players pretend to field a ground ball. However, before putting the glove towards the ground, have the player grab the top of the fingers of the glove and bend them towards the palm or wrist so that the glove area is as large as possible. This is a habit we would like them to get accustomed to on a regular basis and something you will even see major league baseball players doing on a constant basis.

## **DRILL #6: TEE-When hitting off a TEE, look for the following:**

- 1) TEE height should be so the ball is at waist level.
- 2) Before swinging, body is square, weight should be distributed about 60% to the back, 40% to the front. Door knocker knuckles should be aligned.
- 3) Eyes (head) should be on the ball at all times (try having them swing with their eyes closed to show that they have to watch the ball).
- 4) Swing should be all the way through turning their wrists over.

## **ADD TO THIS DRILL:**

- 1) A partially blown up balloon that the player must hold between their knees through the entire swing. This will help them with proper feet spacing and prevent taking big steps backwards and forwards to focus on bat speed and rotating hips.

**DRILL #7: Glove up/Glove down-Teach them to turn up glove when ball is above the waist and turn down glove when ball is below the waist:**

- 1) Give player a ping pong paddle and toss them wiffle or tennis balls from about 8-10 feet away. Have them turn paddle up when ball is thrown above the waist and turn paddle down when ball is thrown below the waist.
- 2) After throwing a few directly at them below and above, make the drill more challenging by throwing below and above to the left and to the right.

**DRILL #8; Throwing mechanics and accuracy. This is a great fun drill to end a practice on:**

- 1) Bring a folding chair or a roughly 12" x 12" piece of plywood that you can mount on top of your tee. Put as large of a stuffed animal as you can fit on it and place on home plate.
- 2) Split your players into 2 teams and initially position the first player from the first team about half way to the pitchers mound (as the players get stronger and more accurate, you can keep moving them back). Alternate your players from the two teams making throws at the stuffed animal awarding one point for every "knockdown". Tally team points after you have gone through all players. Go through the drill a couple of times so that you can attempt to correct any player mechanics problems from the previous throws and hopefully give both teams a chance to "win".

**Take Me Out to the Ball Game**

**1908 Version**

**Author: Jack Norworth**

**Composer: Albert Von Tilzer**

**Published on: 1908, 1927**

"Take me out to the ball game,  
Take me out with the crowd.  
Buy me some peanuts and cracker jack,  
I don't care if I never get back,  
Let me root, root, root for the home team,  
If they don't win it's a shame.  
For it's one, two, three strikes, you're out,  
**At the old ball game."**