



## T-Ball

### Frequently Asked Questions



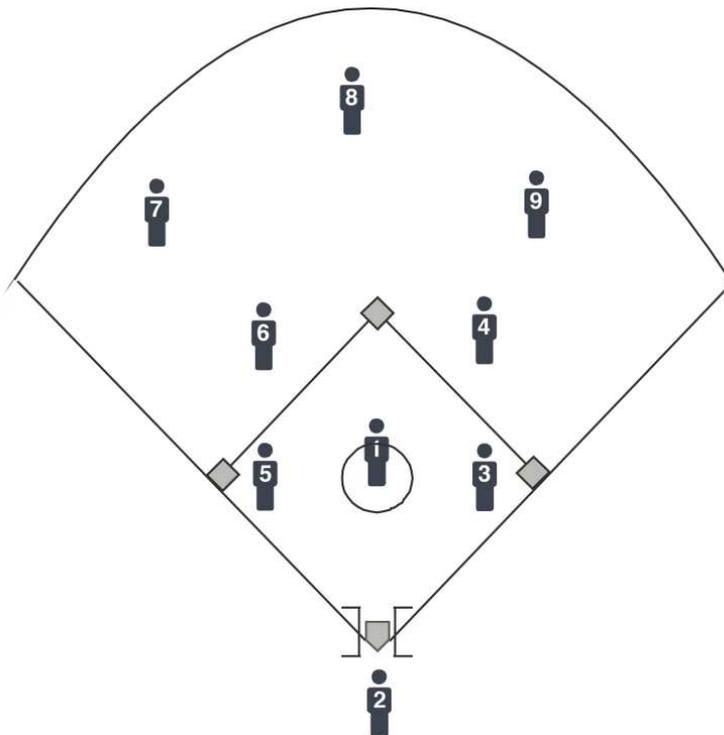
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1. **Q** Where do T-Baller's position themselves in the field?

**A**

- |               |                |                 |
|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Pitcher    | 4. Second Base | 7. Left Field   |
| 2. Catcher    | 5. Third Base  | 8. Centre Field |
| 3. First Base | 6. Short Stop  | 9. Right Field  |

NB: Some associations may have rules that allow an extra fielder to be placed in the outfield.



2. **Q** What different positions are there?

**A** When asking a new player to "go play 2nd base" nine times out of ten the player will go and stand directly "ON" the base. For the first few practices you may need to position your players in the proper area of the field.

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### 1st Base

1st base will be one of the most active positions on the field. The 1st basemen needs to pay attention at all times because most plays will end up at 1st base. The 1st basemen should stand 1-2 steps off 1st base (and 1-2 steps in towards home plate). It's a good idea to have an assistant coach standing by the 1st basemen to ensure the player is paying attention and ready to catch the ball being thrown to them.

### Pitcher

The Pitcher can be a very active fielding position. Many hits are straight up the middle toward the pitcher. Because of this, the pitcher needs to be alert at all times. As the pitcher is the closest position to the hitter the ball reaches the pitcher at a faster speed than any other player. For safety reasons, have the pitcher move back 2 steps off the pitcher's mound to a safer location. The pitcher in T-Ball does not pitch they only field the ball.

### 2nd Base

2nd Base is another position where young T-Ball players will find a lot of action. The 2nd basemen should line up between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> base.

### Shortstop

The Shortstop should line up between the 2nd and 3rd.

### 3rd Base

The 3rd basemen should be stand 1-2 steps off 3rd base (and 1-2 steps towards home plate).

### Catcher

Since players will be hitting off a batting tee, the catcher is more like a fielding position to retrieve the ball and place it on a tee. Coaches and parents should help by standing behind the catcher to assist with stopping any balls thrown in to the catcher. They should also make sure the catcher is clear of any swinging bats or baserunners.

### The Outfield

Unlike softball, in T-Ball there can be up to 4-6 outfielders. You have your traditional Right Field, Center Field, and Left Field positions, as well as the following possible outfield positions:

- Short Field (usually lining up a few steps behind 2nd base)
- Right Center Field (Lining up between Right Field & Center Field)
- Left Center Field (Lining up between Left Field & Center Field)

3. **Q** How do I teach my player to catch the ball?

**A** Start without a glove to help teach the right technique. T-Baller's should start by using softer balls such as tennis or foam balls etc to help build confidence and apply the right mechanics. Using a paddle aid is also a useful way to encourage catching with two hands. Remember to catch balls above the waist with thumbs together and below the waist with "pinky's" together.

4. **Q** Should T-Ballers use softball gloves?

**A** Yes. It is important the child has the appropriate size glove to fit their hand. Show the child how to wear the glove properly by using all the finger slots in the glove, and placing a small flexball (11") in the pocket when not in use. By doing



this the glove will mould to the child's hand.

5. **Q** How do I measure a glove?

**A** Measurement of gloves differs by manufacturer, but the most common technique is to take a flexible measuring tape and measure from the bottom of the heel to the top of the glove in between the webbing and the index finger along the inside of the glove.

T-Ball glove sizes begin around the 9-inch range, the measurement is usually listed on the glove itself. The new, pre-oiled gloves are usually excellent for T-Baller's, as they are soft and require little or no break-in. For a very small child, or one with less strength than his peers, there are vinyl, or combination vinyl-and leather models. These are very inexpensive and, while they will not last as long as higher quality gloves, they bend easily and allow the player to catch the ball from day one. There are also full leather gloves in the under-11 inch size, which cost more, last longer, and might require some break-in.

6. **Q** How can I break my glove in?

**A** Recommended techniques differ from manufacturer to manufacturer, but some of the most common techniques include treatments such as shaving cream, saddle soap, or glove oil. One thing you must be sure to do when treating your glove is to place a ball in the glove to properly form the pocket. It is also helpful to keep a ball in the glove when not in use to maintain the shape and prevent flattening of the pocket. Any combination of these treatments will help but ultimately constant use of the glove will break it in.

7. **Q** Are there teaching cues to help break down the process of fielding?

**A** Yes.

**Ready Position**

The ready position allows players to move quickly in any direction to field the ball. Describe it as "hanging like a gorilla".

**Field Ground Balls using the "Alligator Catch"**

Use the "alligator catch" to explain how to field ground balls. Tell players that the alligator has a big mouth and we use our hands like the mouth of an alligator. The glove hand is the bottom and the throwing hand is the top of the mouth. When the alligator closes his mouth he "eats the ball".

8. **Q** Are there any teaching cues to help break down the process of the throw?

**A** Yes.

**Nose, Toes and Throws**

For beginning players, it is helpful to use a rhyme to help the players remember the proper throwing motion. Say "Nose, Toes and Throws" as they practice throwing.

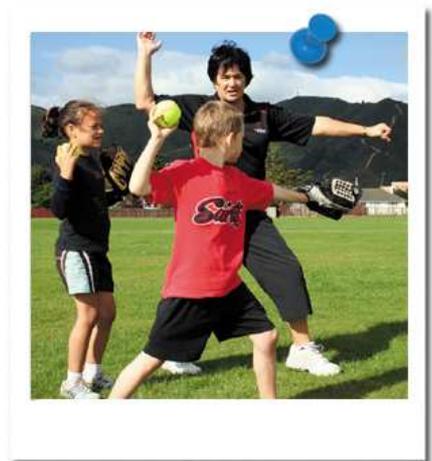
**"Nose"** as they look at the target before throwing.

**"Toes"** as they step toward the target with their glove-side foot

**"Throws"** as they throw the ball.

**Washing Machine Drill**

Have players stand upright with hands on hips, imitating a washing machine agitator.



Follow the washing machine action with a throwing the ball action.

The same upper body rotation is required for hitting and throwing.

Also described as the “Shoulder to Shoulder” rotation i.e. left shoulder faces target at start of throw; right shoulder faces the target at the completion of the follow through (for a right handed thrower).

9. **Q** What’s the most important area/s to watch for when trying to critique a batter?

**A**

- makes sure the starting position of the batter is one step away from the tee and one step sideways (towards the catcher) so they hit the ball out front.
- Hold the bat in the fingers and line up the “door knocking” knuckles.

10. **Q** What is the best way for the batter to get rid of the bat once they have hit the ball and where should they place the bat?

**A** The batter should “drop” the bat away from the plate and running path to first base. A good idea is to place a glove or similar object away from the plate/running path and have the batter drop the bat on the object on the way up to first base. The visual object is a good target for the batter to relate to.

- Keep the head still
- Step to swing
- Have a smooth follow through so that the bat ends up behind the body.

11. **Q** If the bat is too long for the hitter is it best to split the hands or keep both hands together and move them up the handle?

**A** Keep both hands together and move them up the handle. By splitting the hands the batter uses an incorrect technique. Better still; make sure that the batter has an appropriate bat for their size.

12. **Q** How do you know if the bat is too heavy for the hitter?

**A** Hitting a ball hard depends more on bat speed than bat weight so players should use a bat they can swing quickly and easily. A good rule of thumb is to have the batter select the heaviest bat they can swing easily.

13. **Q** Why do the kids often hit the tee and not the ball?

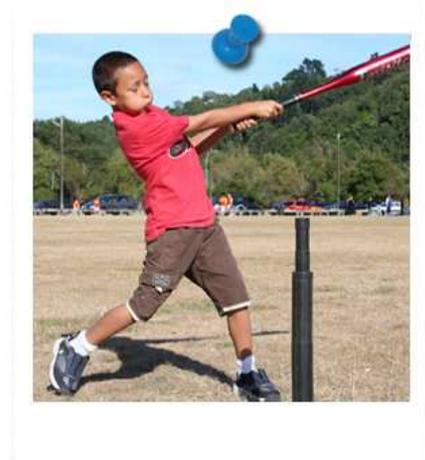
**A** There are several causes that result in this. Here are some of the more common ones.

- Drops the back shoulder.
- The head moves too much hence taking their eyes off the ball.
- The batter is standing too close to the plate restricting the arms from extending on contact.
- The stride is too big which causes all of the above.

14. **Q** Are there any teaching cues to help break down the process of hitting?

**A** Yes. We can break down the swing into 3 parts that will help make the hitting process easier to understand and learn.

1. Set position, hold the bat in the fingers – this helps to maintain wrist flexibility, wrists cocked to apply more leverage, knees slightly bent, hands at top of strike zone, stand slightly behind the tee so that when you strike the ball you are hitting it in front of your body.



2. Step (controlled) and make contact with the ball, arms extended, bat meets ball in the sweet spot (see below), front leg slightly bent, hips rotated.
3. Complete follow through, bat finishing at top of shoulder, hands remain in front of the shoulder, hips have rotated and sole of foot facing the catcher. Brace the front leg.

15. **Q** How far should the batter stand from the tee?

**A** The batter should be in comfortable position away from the tee. Use the following drill at training: place cones or markers where their feet should be placed. Make sure that the placement of the cones is one step away from the tee and one step sideways, so that the child hits the ball "out front".

The hitter should be able to reach and hit the ball in the sweet spot of the bat when they swing. The sweet spot is the most powerful part of the bat (see below).

Use this drill to encourage strong hitting, without allowing the child too much time to think.

The player takes their position alongside the tee and the coach calls:

- "Up!" as they raise the bat
- "Back!" as the bat goes back to armpit level
- "Go!" just hit the ball

