



## Parmalat Learn to Play Sample Lesson

The Parmalat Learn to Play Program is a revolutionary way of introducing the sport of softball to children. Activities included in the manuals help foster the involvement of ALL players, including players with high and low skill levels. Activities and lead-up games are patterned after informal playground games and promise an hour of fun and lots of action.

The following lesson has been taken from the Level 2 Parmalat Learn to Play coaching manual and is intended for children between the ages of 7-8. Each manual contains 18 lesson plans and is tailored to specific age and skill levels. Please contact your Provincial/Territorial Softball Association to purchase a copy of these fantastic softball resources.

### Level 2 (ages 7-8) Sample Lesson:

#### WARM UP

#### Activity 1 – BLOB TAG (5 minutes)

**Skills:** running, dodging, agility, co-operation

**Organization:** mark out boundaries of playing area desired. One player is chosen to be the chaser (beginning the blob) and the rest of the players scatter.

**Activity:**

- on 'go', the blob chases and tries to tag the other players
- tagged players join hands with the blob
- when blob becomes 3 players, only the outside players can tag
- when blob becomes 4 players, split it into 2 mini-blobs

- continue until all players are tagged

## TEAM IN THE OUTFIELD

### Activity 2 – Getting to Know You (5 minutes)

**Skills:** Catching, throwing, getting to know teammates

**Equipment:** 1 ball for every 4 players

**Organization:** 3 groups of 4, with each group positioned in a square formation. Players' distance from one another will be according to ability

**Activity:**

- as players throw the ball to a teammate in their square formation, they call out their own name
- on the second or third round, players call their own name and the name of the player who is to receive the ball
- change 2 people in groups at a time, so players from different groups get to know each other as well

### Activity 3 – Throwing Progressions (10 minutes)

**Skills:** throwing, catching, co-operation

**Equipment:** 1 ball for every 2 players

**Organization:** Players line up across from a partner an appropriate distance apart with one adult assigned to every pair

**Activity:**

- coach teaches progression for learning proper throwing mechanics (keep it short)

#### **Throwing Progression:**

Feedback on mechanics should be given at every opportunity as long as it doesn't interfere too much with the FUN the players are having

Teaching Cues

- grip ball across the seams with fingers (however many fingers will give best control)
- elbow should be as high as shoulder and at a 90-degree angle on take back
- stride foot and glove point at target (left for right-handed players)
- hips open (to the right for right-handed players) when arm is back and up close to target as the arm comes over top
- glove hand comes down and back (like a piston) in opposition to the throwing arm as the throwing arm moves forward
- weight moves back from back foot to stride foot as throwing action starts
- wrist should be underneath the ball as the arm comes forward to release it and produce a reverse spin
- on follow through, the body should continue rotating until the throwing shoulder is pointing at the target – throwing hand continues down to or past the opposite hip, palm down

#### Teaching Progression

##### No Ball

1. Put stride foot (glove side) into stride position with other foot angled slightly open to make it easier to open up the hips
2. Have players stand in “scarecrow” position
3. Point glove hand at target and open hips up to throwing side
4. Practice arm and hip action (open and close the door with hips) with NO step (the stride foot is already in place)
5. Arm action is down, around, back and up and over. This is similar to a swimming action except the throwing arm leads with the elbow in order to get under the ball and throw directly over top to produce an accurate over the top throw
6. Complete the throwing action without a ball. Practice taking a step as hips open, glove hand points to target and throwing arm moves down, around, back and up into throwing position.

##### With Ball

1. Practice proper grip on the ball
  2. Still with stride foot forward (no moving step), practice hip and arm action by tossing a ball back and forth to a partner (or coach if skill level is very low)
  3. Start with feet parallel, about shoulder width apart, and take a step at the target as hips are opening and arm is going back into throwing position. Throw the ball back and forth trying to produce the correct mechanics
- players start with no ball then progress to throwing a ball to a partner
  - this activity can be made fun by seeing how many throws they can catch consecutively or out of 10

#### **Activity 4 – Gimme 5 (5 minutes)**

**Skills:** running through 1B, speed development

**Equipment:** 4 bases

**Organization:** put bases down 30'-40' from players. Form 4 groups of 3

**Activity:**

- players, in turn, take a swing at an imaginary ball, drop bat, run as fast as possible past their base, give coach a “high 5”, return to base as if running to 2B, touch base and should “GREEN LIGHT” signaling to the next player to leave home
- make sure players are running full speed across the bag, slowing down only after touching it

### **TEAM IN THE OUTFIELD**

#### **Activity 5 – Pert Gert or Pert Bert (5 minutes)**

**Skills:** proper use of glove for catching, how to wear it, how to use it

**Equipment:** 1 ball and 1 glove for each player

**Organization:** each player has a ball and space to work in where they won't bump into others. Objective is to see which “Pert Gert” (girl) or “Pert Bert” (boy) can get under the ball and catch it.

**Activity:**

- each player tosses the ball in the air for a self-catch
- coaches emphasize proper use of glove
  1. See if they can throw it higher each time
  2. How many consecutive catches can they make?
  3. Throw a little away from you and run to get under
- a progression would be to have 1 adult toss the ball to every two players
- if skill level is high enough, players can throw to each other

**Activity 6 – Champ (5 minutes)**

**Skills:** catching, throwing

**Equipment:** 1 ball for every 2 players

**Organization:** 1 adult for every 2 players or players in partners if they are capable of throwing and catching the ball back and forth

**Activity:**

- every time a ball is caught by one of the pair they get a letter of the word “CHAMP”
- partners can compete against other pairs to see who can spell CHAMP first. Letters can be awarded for good throws back to the adult as well
- For variation, have players select other short words (i.e. Barney, Tigers ,etc).

**Activity 7 – Pitching Co-ordination Drill (5 minutes)**

**Skills:** arm/hip action of windmill pitch

**Activity:**

- coach teaches arm/hip action with players practicing without a ball

**Pitching Progression:**

### Teaching Cues

- relax arms, slight bend in elbow
- palm faces backwards and snaps forward as arms passes leg
- pretend to let go of as arm brushes past leg
- co-ordinate opening and closing of hips with dropping arm
- front leg straightens as arm reaches contact point
- shoulders stay back over top of the hips

### Teaching Progression

1. demonstrate proper technique
2. start with glove side foot in stride position (a long walking step directly ahead of the other foot). Pivot foot is directly behind stride foot but toed slightly outwards. Put pitching arm back into pendulum position with palm facing backwards, in relaxed position (elbow, not locked).
3. Let arm fall in relaxed manner so that the arm brushes past the side of the leg on the way past.
4. Once a relaxed drop of the arm is consistent, concentrate on opening up the hips (belly button faces right for right-handed players) when arm is up and back, and closing the hips (belly button faces catcher) when the arm passes the side of the leg.
5. Once the co-ordination is consistent, make sure the front leg (stride leg) straightens as the arm falls downward. Also make sure shoulders are kept back over the hips so the young pitcher doesn't get in the habit of bending at the waist on the release.

## SCRIMMAGE

### Activity 8 – Modified Softball Game (45 minutes)

#### Activity:

- An adult will pitch to their own team
- 7 pitches are thrown to each batter to allow them to hit a fair ball. If the player does not hit a fair ball, they go to first base if a swing was taken on at least four pitches

- All players will play defense, but there will be a maximum of 7 players in the infield
- All players will bat each inning
- There will be no advances on overthrows