



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 3 Parmalat Learn to Play coaching manual and is intended for children between the ages of 9-10. 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 3 (ages 9-10) 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

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Activity 2 – ARM CIRCLES AND HIP THRUSTS (5 minutes)

Skills: arm/hip action of windmill pitch

Activity: (Review Co-ordination drill on pg. 99 of manual)

Co-ordination Drill (Except from pg. 88)

Teaching Cues

- relaxed arm, slight bend in elbow
- palm faces backward and snaps forward as arm passes leg
- pretend to let go of ball 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 outward. 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 to the 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 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

TEAM IN THE INFIELD

Activity 3 – 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 players, with each group positioned in a square formation. Distance between players will depend on the ability of the players

Activity:

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

THROWING & CATCHING

Activity 4 – THROWING PROGRESSION (5 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) – See Throwing Progression on pg 88.

Throwing Progression (Excerpt from pg. 88):

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