



Kickball Handbook

Introduction:

The kickball division is for 4-year old players. Five year olds may occasionally play kickball if developmentally appropriate. Kickball is a version of the game of baseball that does not require the challenging hand-eye tasks of throwing, catching and hitting, but still introduces the basic rules and organization of the game.

Division objectives and values:

1. At the end of the season, we hope that all of our players will want to play next year in the AA t-ball division, and encourage friends to play.
2. We will meet every player where they are and support them in their own development, aiming to have them end the season as better players than when they started
3. We will foster team spirit in which players support their teammates and respect their opponents
4. Baseball is a game of movement. Kickball sessions should involve lots of movement and minimal to no 'standing on line' waiting for a turn at a drill
5. Safety is important to us. There are no bats permitted at kickball sessions.
6. Players will help clean up and pitch in at the end of sessions.

Typical division schedule:

The kickball division meets one time per week. Sessions are Saturdays from 1045-1145 at Mill River. Play will be on the grassy area near the main parking lot.

General thoughts, suggestions, observations and resources:

1. Ask your players to wear their Amherst Baseball shirts to school occasionally. This builds pride in their own participation and is great advertising for the league
2. Communication from the division coordinator to the parents is key. Parents like to know what's going on.
3. Be realistic in your expectations for play in this division. The primary goal is to have fun, move, and learn a little bit about how baseball is played. Many of our players have never played catch before and have never seen a game played. Many parents are not 'baseball people' and may be new to our country and sports culture. Our objective is to send them away having had fun and having been active and wanting to keep playing.

4. Encourage parents to play catch and wiffleball with their kids as much as possible. The purpose of the kickball division is not to develop baseball-specific skills.
 - a. Tee-ball is not baseball! Do not expect these games to look like baseball games. If we spend some time ensuring movement and fun the baseball will come.
 - b. We want kids to leave practice and end the season wanting more.
5. It is up to coaches whether to provide (or get a volunteer to provide) a snack time during practices and games. Kids like snack. But the sessions are not long and snack can consume a lot of time.

A sample practice schedule and activities:

0-10	Arrive and do some very simple, fun warmup: jumping jacks, somersaults, toe touching, silly walks, running in place, This is not a high school-style stretching session, but just some fun, dynamic, warmup
10-20	Running the bases: Practice identifying the bases; run to first; run to second, run to third, run all the way to home.
20-30	Throwing: Give each player a tennis ball and pick a destination (e.g. Mill 1 scoreboard). Players throw the ball as far as they can, run to get it, then throw it again. Repeat this several times. Encourage the players to throw overhand not underhand.
30	Quick water break.
30-40	Pitching and kicking: Pair the players off and have them take 'batting practice'. Player 1 'pitches' by rolling the kickball to player 2. Player 2 kicks it and player 1 'fields' the ball. Repeat for several minutes and then switch the roles of player 1 and player 2.
40-45	Fielding: As the season progress you may want to introduce the concept of field a ball and then running to tag a base (usually 1 st).
45-50	Baserunning relay race: Half the team starts at home and half at second. Each child runs one lap with a teammate starting when the runner hits their starting base. Each base should be touched. Use your judgment as to whether to call players back for missed bases. A non-competitive version would have each child running only half a lap before a teammate goes from the opposite starting base.
50-60	Wrapup and 1-2-3 Amherst! Team Cheer.

As the season progresses you can consider trying something that looks more like a kickball 'game'. Be mellow. It will be chaos and will not look anything like baseball! Or even, really, kickball. Coaches should be creative in making fun practice plans including other kickball games. Also, play tag, play ultimate, ..., have fun.

Equipment:

Kickball equipment includes

1. 5-6 kickballs
2. Some tennis balls
3. 1 set of throw down bases
4. First aid kit and ice packs

Fields:

The kickball division will use the grassy area just east of the main parking area at Mill River.

The Town of Amherst provides only minimal field maintenance for youth baseball. In return, by longstanding arrangement, we do not pay fees to the town for field usage. Unfortunately, we are not able to maintain fields other than the two at Mill River using our available volunteer time and equipment and at this point we have not been able to negotiate a fee arrangement that would ensure additional town maintenance. Kickballers will get access to the proper Mill River fields as they graduate to the AA t-ball division.

Rainouts and makeups:

Rescheduling practices and games is at the complete discretion of the coaches.