



Shetland Development Program

Introduction

Welcome coaches and parents to the FRAA Shetland Baseball Program. In efforts to enhance and increase engagement of your baseball experience, the FRAA Baseball Development Coordinators have created a Shetland Development Program for future Commissioners and Coaches.

At the Shetland age group (6 years old and under), studies and experts have all concluded that implementing more skill activities keeps the interest of the young ball player and provides them not only skills to progress to the next level of play but also increased motor skills for human development. These events through Shetland should be fun, encouraging and memorable for all parties involved.

Goals

The goals of this program are simple but important to the development. We ask that each coach, volunteer and parent or guardian understands each of the goals listed below and embraces these on the journey of developing our youth.

- 1) Clear expectations for players, coaches, and parents/ guardians
- 2) Provide a safe and fun environment
- 3) Develop and increase skill level of our young athletes
- 4) Strong emphasis on encouragement and positive feedback
- 5) Provide the basis of structure and discipline for baseball, school and life.

Communicating Expectations

Prior to the start of the season it is a good idea for coaches to communicate the following to parents/guardians on your team:

- 1) Introduction of yourself, Asst. Coaches and players on your roster.
- 2) Mission and goals of the program
- 3) Clear understanding that the Shetland Program is about skills development
- 4) Expectations of parents, guardians and spectators:
 - a) only positive and encouraging words to each player
 - b) encouragement for parents to participate as assistant coaches. (Background checks)
 - c) encourage fans to root for every player on the field, including the opposing team
 - d) encourage parents to interact with all team parents (you may be playing ball with these folks for the next 10-12 years)
 - e) only coaches of the team will provide instruction on the field. The head coach should be the loudest voice on the field (please don't confuse the kids)
 - f) NO adults past the fence gates or field unless head coach permits and background checks are complete
 - g) any and all concerns and questions must be addressed directly with head coach.

Safe and Fun Environment

For our youth to begin to enjoy the game, team and structure they must feel safe in the environment, and it is the responsibility of all coaches, parents and spectators to ensure the safety of the children.

We want our kids to continue to develop with baseball or softball as they progress in age. We also recognize this is a sport that may incur some "lumps" such as bad hops, overthrows and general mistakes. As such, safety needs to be explained to the kids and parents alike. All coaches should remain vigilant at all times. Correct any problems or potential issues prior to them becoming a major issue. The following are tips and rules to follow to ensure the safety of the players and coaches during practices and/ or games:

- 1) **Bats** - Only 2 team players should have a bat in their hands at any given time. The batter at the plate and the batter on deck. ALL other bats should be hung on the bat racks in the dugouts or in the players gear bag. 1 coach should be working with each batter when they are in the on-deck circle. This will help with no other players walking in on the on-deck batter and the coach should be working with each batter on hitting mechanics (i.e. how to

hold the bat, proper batting stance, Practice swings...etc) Absolutely no exceptions to this rule.

- 2) **Warmups** -Instead of having the kids warm up their arm when they show up for practice or games by throwing with each other in the outfield, have the kids perform hitting practice first. The order in which they show up to practice determines their hitting order. This encourages them to get to practice early. They don't run the risk of getting hit by an errant thrown ball.
- 3) **Engagement** - One of the most challenging elements of this age group is keeping kids engaged while in the field. It is important to recruit as many parents or guardians as possible. Please encourage all parents to get their clearances so they can help. You truly can't have enough help. Please keep in mind that all helpers must be aligned with the head coach and the goals of the program. Have these assistants posted throughout the field. Any kids that may be diverging from focus, have the assistant engage with them and teach them to concentrate. This engagement may simply be standing near them and talking with and showing how they should act.
- 4) **Throwing** - When throwing a ball to another player it is imperative that every player ensures the receiving player is paying attention. It is a good skill to get each thrower to say the name of the person they are throwing to. This promotes communication, team building and safety.
- 5) **Dugout behavior** - When the team is batting, it is important to encourage the team on the bench to cheer on their teammate batting. Make up chants or use the standard "let's go, Bob" whatever works for you and your team. Kids should NOT be climbing the fence or sticking their fingers through the fence. One assistant coach should be designated as bench coach during these times. This should NOT be the same coach that is helping the on-deck batter. The bench coach should be between the bench and the on-deck circle. No kids should pass unless they are advancing to the on-deck circle.
- 6) **Behavior problems** - If you see a kid behavior poorly and potentially putting themselves or others in harm, let the kid know that this will not be tolerated with a warning. Second offense is bench time and lastly is parental engagement. Zero tolerance!!!
- 7) **Sliding** - No headfirst sliding is allowed. Teach the kids how to slide. Encourage each kid to slide into 2nd and 3rd base when advancing. This prevents collisions at each of these bases.

- 8) **Throwing bats** - Kids at this age group tend to throw the bat after they hit the ball. Work with the kids to stop this behavior. You can also implement a cone about 10 feet down the first base line that the kids need to drop the bat at this cone or drop into a bucket.
- 9) **Defensive Alignment** - Keep kids playing defense out of the base paths when in the field. Move them forward or backward and encourage them to stay out of the base path. Should kids collide (and they will), please defer to your concussion training and the proper steps to assess and notify.

Equipment and Tools for Skill Development

The following are helpful and fun items that are appropriate for the Shetland Program to use during practices, pre-game warm-ups or while at home:

- 1) FRAA Supplied Items for Coaches:
 - a. Bucket of Tee ball baseballs
 - b. Face guard for pitcher position
 - c. 1 Baseball Tee
- 2) Optional Items for Coaches to Provide:
 - a. Bucket of tennis balls
 - b. Bucket of foam or plastic balls
 - c. 3-5 36" tall safety cones
 - d. 3-5 inexpensive plungers (turn upside down in 36" cone to hold beach ball for throwing or hitting)
 - e. 3-5 medium beach balls
 - f. 1 pack of low-profile field cones
 - g. 1 kickball
 - h. 3 Hula Hoops

The following are required to be purchased by the parents for each player. These items should be purchased and brought to each practice and game:

- 1) 1 Tee-Ball rated baseball bat **
- 2) 1 Baseball Glove of good quality leather and well broken-in ***
- 3) 1 Baseball Batting Helmet*
- 4) Baseball Pants*

5) Baseball Cleats*

- * Used equipment that is in good working order is fine and encouraged. Check with Pinto team parents to see if they have anything they would like to “get rid of”.
- ** Tee-ball bats should be very light in weight (drop 12 (-12) or drop 13(-13)) and sized - appropriately to the player. A good tee-ball bat is typically priced as low at \$25 to \$30.
- *** Plastic gloves while inexpensive are not appropriate when attempting to catch a ball. 9” leather gloves can be purchased for \$25 - \$30 and less for used gloves. Used gloves are typically already broke-in.

Reference Material

The following websites provide great ideas for skill development and drills to do during practices:

- 1) <https://www.littleleague.org/university/articles/the-complete-little-league-tee-ball-program/>
- 2) <https://www.littleleague.org/downloads/tee-ball-program/>
- 3) [T-Ball Drills and Practice Plans](#)

The following websites provide great tips for field maintenance before/ after practices and games:

- 1) [Municipality of Murrysville Field Maintenance](#) <-Section 2 for Baseball Fields
- 2) <https://youtu.be/tq9qE--fcg0> <-Lining a field
- 3) <https://youtu.be/MoO86YQGQfw> <- How to drag a field
- 4) <https://youtu.be/3rMeCrtMPGw> <- Drying tips

The following websites provide great coaching tips for new coaches:

- 1) <https://www.youthbaseballedge.com/> <- Excellent podcast
- 2) <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8rIhLrIPcgN9E3929MaIRQ>
- 3) https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=justin+stone+elite+baseball+training+
- 4) https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Tee+Ball+drills

Appendix A

Document Last Updated: January 2022

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