



## BlastBall & T-Ball Rules

### Goals for BlastBall & T-Ball

“My kid loved it so much, he now sleeps with his glove.”

*--Parent comment from a player who attended the ABR Snow-BALL*

Coaches come from many different backgrounds. Some played ball in school or even professionally. For some, this may be the first time you have picked up a ball since you played youth ball.

No matter what your background, ABR wants all its coaches to be guided by a common set of goals. We want BlastBall and T-Ball players to:

1. Love baseball enough to want to play again next season;
2. Begin to understand what it means to be part of a team;
3. Be introduced to the basic fundamentals of fielding, throwing, catching, hitting, and running;
4. Maximize opportunities for “touches” to help players begin to build these skills;
5. Get an age-appropriate introduction to actual game play.

Note that game play is *last*, not first at this level. And skill-building isn't even the #1 thing. BlastBall and T-Ball is the level where we want our kids to bond with baseball. This means that rather than bringing them to the game, we need to bring the game to them.

## The Season

To help the kids associate our year with the Big Leagues, we are breaking our season up into three parts:

1. Pitchers & Catchers
2. Spring Training
3. Game & Derby Days

Before we go through all the steps, let's clarify a few scheduling decisions for this year:

- **All scheduled events will be on Saturdays.** Coaches may request weekday or Sunday practice slots in March, and may talk with other coaches about scheduling weekday games. These practices or games are optional for both coaches and players.
- **Game play will be infield only.** In order to maximize touches and keep game play moving along quickly, there will be no outfield play at BlastBall or T-Ball. After discussion, we believe that there is enough for kids to learn about the game in the infield, and beginning outfield play in A ball gives kids plenty of time to learn that position.
- **Game days will be play/practice:** As some players play on the infield, those either not in the batting order or not in the field will go with other coaches into the outfield to practice particular skills. So even for teams not practicing during the week, we will still keep our focus squarely on team building and skill building.

### “Pitchers & Catchers”

For those that don't know, the term “Pitchers & Catchers” is the part of spring training where those players come a little earlier than the rest, and position players can, but don't have to, arrive early.

The first week is “Pitchers & Catchers.” Coaches can optionally reserve a field that day and have a 1-hour practice with their players. This will allow coaches to get to know their players and the players to know each other.

For those that take advantage of this opportunity, we recommend that you:

- **Keep it simple:** Don't try to do too much the first day. Allow players and coaches to get to know each other.
- **Keep it silly:** Every coach has a different style, but when kids smile and laugh, they fall in love with what they're doing. A simple warmup exercise can be made fun by making it a little silly. We don't want the kids goofing off, but we do want them having fun.
- **Talk team:** We will be giving out medals at the end of the season, but they will be *earned* through competing in cooperative mini-games each week. All these games are designed to be “work together” games, and from the first practice on, talk to your kids about how the only way to have a successful season is to work as a team.

- **Assess more than teach:** Rather than getting right into the teaching, this pre-season practice is a great time to just have the kids play and get a sense of what your kids can do both in terms of skill and attention span. One can also get a good sense of whether some kids do better together, or in separate groups. So use the practice to “see what they’ve got.”

## **Spring Training**

The first two Saturdays of our season, rather than independent practices, ABR will coordinate a 4-station training session where teams will travel to each station to compete together in a skill-based mini-game. Each station will last 10 minutes, so we expect these sessions to last about an hour total.

ABR representatives will be there to set up the games, explain the games to players and coaches, and help the teams move from station-to-station and answer any questions. We will also pass out strips of star stickers to coaches who will reward their kids with a sticker for winning each game as a team.

The first week we will have the same games for both levels. The second week we will make some tweaks for BlastBall and T-Ball. A supplemental document with the setup and games for our Spring Training dates will be forthcoming.

Teams that have participated in Spring Training in previous seasons may opt out and, field space-permitting, hold an optional practice instead.

**The Star System & Post-Season Medals:** At our two spring training events, we will hand each coach a sheet of star stickers. We would like coaches to give a star (or more) to each player when the team has “won” one of our instructive games. We want to set a goal all players on a team collecting 10 or more stars, and if they do, all of them will “win” their medal at the end of the season.

This shifts the “everyone wins” perspective that we normally have with post-season awards and substitutes an achievement-based, team-oriented goal. Extra stars (or other stickers) can be awarded for excellent play, effort, or attitude.

| We have found that kids really respond these stickers, based on the old Pirates [“Stargell Stars.”](#) Coaches may choose to do that or find another way to have them track their achievement.

## Game & Derby Days

Each Saturday we will have two-team “Game & Derby Days.”

The format has been modified from exclusively traditional game play based on previous coach feedback and experience to keep the games moving and focus on our primary goals at this level.

**You will need at least 4 parent coaches for each team to coordinate.** We recommend coaches secure commitments before each game so you do not have to scramble for help.

## BlastBall! Rules

### Game Play

- Time limit is one hour.
- The home team will sit on the 3<sup>rd</sup> base side of the field.
- The game play portion will consist of a *maximum* of 6 batters and 6 fielders.
- Fielders will stand on [5 markers on the field](#) relating to 6 different infield positions. 1=1B, 2=2B, 3=SS, 4=3B, 5=P.
  - If needed, place marker #6 directly in front of 2<sup>nd</sup> base. ABR recommends using a 6<sup>th</sup> fielder only if you don’t have another choice (like if you only have 6 players show, or if you have a roster of 12 players). 5 is the preferred number.
- Coaches for the fielding team should be located behind the infield to knock balls down for infielders.
- An additional coach for the fielding team should be located at first base.
- The base should be placed 40 feet from home plate.
- Batters will hit off a tee located just in front of home plate.
- The BlastBall minimum distance marker should be set at around 10 feet.
- The batting team should have a first base coach and a coach helping batters.
- Batters will hit with a BlastBall or other soft bat.
- BlastBalls or [Soft Training Balls](#) will be used.
- A towel or mat should be placed behind the batter as a “drop zone” for the bat.
- The batter will hit the ball into play and run through first base.
- Fielders should field the ball and throw it to the coach at first base.
- Once all batters have batted, the teams change sides.
- After each group has batted once, those groups will move to the “Derby Area”
- No score is kept during game play.
- The goal should be for each group to play 2 innings and play 2 derby games if time allows.
- OPTION: Teams may play with all four bases with agreement of *both coaches*. Players should advance only one base at a time.
- OPTION: An orange cone can be placed 4-6 feet beyond first base to help teach runners to run *through* rather than to the base.

- **OPTION:** After each batter, fielders can be rotated to the next position on the field (so each player plays a different position for each batter, moving in numeric order).
- **OPTION:** You may use cones to create “zones” on the infield in order to try and keep players from moving too far away to field a ball.

### **Derby Play**

**CONCEPT:** When other players are involved in game play, the other members of each team will play skill-based mini-games, or a “Derby.” Each week will be focused on a different skill, and ABR will give coaches a suggested game to play with their kids. These will be cooperative, competitive games that they are working together to win.

**LOCATION:** A coach or coaches will take their kids into the outfield (home team will use left field, visiting team right field) to conduct their derby. They will play this game until the game inning is complete, and then the groups will trade places.

**EXAMPLE: HIT-THE-COACH DERBY!** Players are given soft balls (practice balls, tennis balls) and all throw at the same time trying to bop the coach. If the team *together* bop the coach 100 times in the full hour, then the whole teams win. Bonus points for good form or longer throws can be awarded. This makes the game a full team cooperative exercise with the groups building on each other’s score to reach a common goal.

**AWARD:** Like with our star stickers for Spring Training, ABR recommends that players are awarded stickers for winning the games, working toward the goal of winning their medal at the end of the season.

### **Post Game**

At the 1-hour point, teams will gather together, exchange “good game” handshakes, and return to their benches. Coaches will award players stickers for winning their Derby game of the day, and for examples of good play or good sportsmanship.

### **Weather**

Rained-out games will not be made up. Teams may use optional practice dates and fields to make up games at their discretion.

## T-Ball Rules

### Game Play

- Time limit is one hour.
- The home team will sit on the 3<sup>rd</sup> base side of the field.
- The game play portion will consist of a *maximum* of 5 batters and 6 fielders.
- Fielders will stand on [5 markers on the field](#) relating to 6 different infield positions. 1=1B, 2=2B, 3=SS, 4=3B, 5=P.
  - If needed, place marker #6 directly in front of 2<sup>nd</sup> base. ABR recommends using a 6<sup>th</sup> fielder only if you don't have another choice (like if you only have 6 players show, or if you have a roster of 12 players). 5 is the preferred number.
- Coaches for the fielding team should be located behind the infield to knock balls down for infielders.
- An additional coach for the fielding team should be located at first base.
- Traditional 60' bases may be use, or throw down bases at a closer distance by mutual agreement of the coaches.
- Batters will hit off a tee located just in front of home plate.
- The batting team should have a first base and third base coach, as well as a coach helping batters.
- Batters will hit with tee-ball bat.
- On-deck hitters are permitted, but must be monitored by a parent and located in an area behind the backstop for safety.
- Level 1 safety balls or [Soft Training Balls](#) will be used. Level 1 safety balls are the default. Any change must be agreed to by *both* teams' coaches.
- A towel or mat should be placed behind the batter as a "drop zone" for the bat.
- Batters will put the ball in play and run one base at a time.
- If an "out" is made, runners will stay on base.
- Fielders should field the ball and throw it to the coach at first base.
- Once all batters have batted, the teams change sides.
- After each group has batted once, those groups will move to the "Derby Area"
- No score is kept during game play.
- The goal should be for each group to play 2 innings and play 2 derby games if time allows.
- OPTION: The final batter in the order is allowed to run all the way around the bases if both teams' coaches agree to that rule before the game.
- OPTION: An orange cone can be placed 4-6 feet beyond first base to help teach runners to run *through* rather than to first base.
- OPTION: You may use cones to create "zones" on the infield in order to try and keep players from moving too far away to field a ball.
- OPTION: After each batter, fielders can be rotated to the next position on the field (so each player plays a different position for each batter, moving in numeric order).

- OPTION: Beginning at mid-season, a ball hit to the outfield (fielded by a coach) can be run out for a double, and any player on base may advance a **maximum of two bases**. Both teams should play by the same set of rules and the “one base” rule is the default.
- OPTION: Beginning at mid-season, coaches may introduce *limited* coach pitching. Coaches must throw from a kneeling position and is allowed **two** pitches. After two pitches, the player will hit off a tee.
- OPTION: Coaches may introduce the concept of force outs and tag outs discretion. Offense and defense are to a certain extent “parallel play” so even if a player is tagged out, (s)he should be encouraged to continue to run to the next base.
- OPTION: Beginning at mid-season, full field play (adding outfielders—catchers NEVER permitted) may be added only with the agreement of both teams’ coaches. If both teams’ coaches do not agree, neither team may use outfielders.

### **Derby Play**

**CONCEPT:** When other players are involved in game play, the other members of each team will play skill-based mini-games, or a “Derby.” Each week will be focused on a different skill, and ABR will give coaches a suggested game to play with their kids. These will be cooperative, competitive games that they are working together to win.

**LOCATION:** A coach or coaches will take their kids into the outfield (home team will use left field, visiting team right field) to conduct their derby. They will play this game until the game inning is complete, and then the groups will trade places. Coaches should move their players far enough into the outfield so as not to have the players at risk of being struck by hard-hit balls.

**EXAMPLE: HIT-THE-COACH DERBY!** Players are given soft balls (practice balls, tennis balls) and all throw at the same time trying to bop the coach. If the team *together* bop the coach 100 times in the full hour, then the whole teams win. Bonus points for good form or longer throws can be awarded. This makes the game a full team cooperative exercise with the groups building on each other’s score to reach a common goal.

**AWARD:** Like with our star stickers for Spring Training, ABR recommends that players are awarded stickers for winning the games, working toward the goal of winning their medal at the end of the season.

### **Post Game**

At the 1-hour point, teams will gather together, exchange “good game” handshakes, and return to their benches. Coaches will award players stickers for winning their Derby game of the day, and for examples of good play or good sportsmanship.

### **Equipment**

- Batting helmets are required for T-Ball.
- No game bats or balls may be used for hitters “on deck” hitters. Only the batter may be holding a bat.

### **Weather**

Rained-out games will not be made up. Teams may use optional practice dates and fields to make up games at their discretion.

### **Optional Weekday Practices & Games**

Coaches are given the option of reserving a weekly practice field. ABR will give coaches a weekly preview of the Derby event for that week along with suggested drills, and would recommend that coaches focus on that skill during their practice.

Teams may also mutually agree to schedule weekday games. The Game & Derby format should be used.

**HAVE A GREAT SEASON!**