



The aim of Small Sox is to enhance participation and above all, fun. It is a combination of active play and T-Ball. The duration is approximately 45 minutes and starts at 9 am on Saturdays.

Ideally those running Small Sox relate well to young children and know how to have fun with the children as well as parents.

If some children do not wish to participate at certain times, they shouldn't be forced. Encouragement and praise is paramount. Including the parents as often as possible is additionally good for the children, as they love seeing mum or dad running around the bases!

It is important to always teach the children and their parents to warm up properly when they arrive by throwing the ball to each other within a short distance and facing the same way to avoid errant throws that may hit others. Normally all kids are in one line and parents in another facing them. Don't spend too much time trying to teach children of this age to catch and throw, as they should be engaged and learning well on their own for the most part. However, always encourage the use of 2 hands and as the season progresses; teach kids and parents to step with the correct stepping motion (toward the target with opposite leg) and the use of the glove side arm (sweep in front of / point toward their target).

By informing parents of why we do things, they can help their children at home.

By also keeping parents actively involved and aware of the reasons why we do things, is encouraging more parents into coaching T-Ball teams and to furthering their skills as their children progress through the grades.

Active Play Warm up Games



- Have them jog
- Traffic Lights: Green Light means run around and act crazy. Red Light means Stop! Orange light means Skip on the spot.
 - Get creative such as adding a Night light – which means lay on the ground and have a rest.
- Part of the stretching routine : Bean Game
 - Jumping Bean – jumping on the spot
 - Runner Bean – running on the spot
 - Broad Bean – arms outstretched and legs outstretched (use this as part of spreading out)
 - Baked Bean – lay on the ground
 - Jelly Bean – Wobble all around
 - Chilly Bean – Cuddle yourself and act cold
 - Mexican Bean – wipe forehead and go “pew” as if hot
 - Frozen Bean – Still
 - Bean Sprouts – On Tip Toes and stretch right up
 - French Bean – Lift one leg at a time, clap hands under leg and say ooh, la, la and repeat with other leg
 - Jack in the Beanstalk – start crouching and then gradually unfold to stretch right up tall
 - Kidney Beans – Bend over and touch your toes
 - Microwave Beans – Crouch and touch the floor and then jump up in a star (exploding) like manner
 - Mean Bean – Stomp around and look grumpy
 - Bean Casserole – all get together for group hug
- Perhaps then do a couple of leg stretches and arm stretches (to encourage warming up)
- Relay Races – put cones out and get the children racing each other around the cones etc, handing the rubber chickens over like a baton. Keep the distance short and age appropriate.
- Zig Zag running races around cones

Don't feel the need to do all of the above- change things weekly but observe what the children enjoy and gravitate toward those things. Make sure they don't get too tired before the tee-ball game!

Skills & Fun Drills

- Throw the ball in the bucket – place bucket on 1st base – roll a ball out and get the player to field the ball and throw into or hit the bucket (learning to throw to first). Keep the distance short.
- Running around the bases – get them running in the direction of the bases and yelling out the correct number as in 1, 2, 3 & home. Or 1st, 2nd 3rd and home. (learning the correct names of bases and which way to run)
- Expand on the above base running by having them all lining up near the batters box, call out any base number and have them all run to that base.
- Dropping the bat – teach them where to drop the bat after hitting the ball. (place a cone in the appropriate spot)
- Fielding ready position: show them the correct stance (bending knees, weight forward on their feet, etc.)
- Fielding a ground ball – mimic a crocodile (hand over glove when fielding)
- Holding a bat – 2 hands together at all times
- Batting technique – get in position, swing bat or slay dragon whilst squishing the bug – using hip technique

The aim of the above is to teach them some fundamental skills but not to overdo it. Children of this age can only learn a few things over a period of time but you will be amazed at how quickly they can learn.

T- BALL



Split players into small groups (can use 4-5 or whatever works best) and play game of T-Ball. Parents will need to assist as much as possible.

Play the game for as long as the kids can handle. Don't overdo it, otherwise they will get bored and restless.

Keeping the teams small enables them to bat and change over quickly to keep them engaged. You may have success letting them bat through twice before switching.

Children should learn the ready position at all times. It's important to teach them to field the ball, turn and throw to 1st base. A parent will need to assist on first base.

GEAR

- Bases
- Yellow foam bats (HART SPORT)
- Soft yellow balls (small size) (HART SPORT)
- Tee
- Rubber chickens (HART SPORT)
- Other items i.e. feathers or other items to help them with hand-eye co-ordination
- Encourage wearing little gloves
- Uniforms (teaches them a sense of pride and great for promotion of the sport, keep these simple.
- Must wear shoes
- Must wear caps

INCENTIVES

Player of the Day: If you have a large group, try and give out 3 trophies at least per week (to be returned the following week). Make it a goal for all children to get POD at some stage. Talk to them individually and work together at a goal which will allow them to do well and receive the POD.

If club can afford to purchase a freddo or lollipop for each child, it means everyone gets something each week. This can be very cheap and creative, such as funny glasses for the boys and princess stars for the girls - \$2 total at a shop as a one off treat.

PROVEN SUCCESS

Reasons why this grade is successful:

- Not many activities for children of this age to do
- Encourages confidence and team participation at an early age
- Enables parents to also learn at the same time
- Enables parents to have fun with their kids
- Enables extended family, grandparents, etc. to come along and promote to their friends, spreading participation
- Promotes the game out in the public as a lot of these children wear their uniforms still when finished
- Gives young players a good introduction to T-Ball but is safer by using age appropriate gear
- Many players progress through the years and softball becomes a game they enjoy and participate in throughout their lifetime

The Small Sox programme was developed by the Howick Softball Club (Auckland) and has been in effect for the last 3 seasons. The popularity of the Small Sox programme is growing in popularity and has been adopted by a number of softball clubs.

One way to promote is by distributing leaflets at all kindergartens and play centres, as well as word of mouth in the local community. If budget allows, advertising in the local newspapers with other grades available at the club is a great promotion.