



# North West Little League (NWLL)

COACHES HANDBOOK

2026 SEASON





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## Introduction

Welcome to the NWLL 2025 baseball season!

Thank you for volunteering to be a coach. Without you, the season could not happen.

NWLL is a not for profit, grassroots organization that is run entirely by volunteers. NWLL is a member of Calgary Little League District 3, Little League Alberta, and Little League Canada. We operate under the Little League International umbrella and are governed by Little League rules, practices, and regulations. NWLL is committed to providing baseball opportunities to a wide range of ages and skills, from 5 years old through to and including 16 years of age within our association boundaries. Communities within our boundaries include:

- Arbour Lake
- Bearspaw
- Bearspaw Ridge
- Bearspaw Ridge Estates
- Church Ranch
- Citadel
- Crestview Estates
- Dalhousie
- Edgemont
- Hamptons
- Hawkwood
- Nolan Hill
- Ranchlands
- Rocky Ridge
- Royal Oak
- Royal Vista
- Sherwood

Any child living or attending school within the above communities is eligible to play baseball with NWLL.

Our philosophy is to teach players the basics of baseball in a fun, safe environment. Along with improving their skills, an emphasis is placed on teaching them the respect of the game, other players, coaches and umpires, as well as other life skills. The goal and focus are to promote physical development through the game of baseball by providing a healthy environment in which children of various levels of ability find pleasure in learning baseball. As coaches, you are tasked with developing baseball skills, teaching and developing sportsmanship in the context of healthy competition, teaching basic rules and ultimately promoting self-esteem among players while encouraging a passion for the sport.



## **Message from the President**

Thank you for stepping up to take on a coaching role and volunteering your time and energy to make this a successful NWLL 2026 baseball season.

Baseball can be a challenging and frustrating game to learn for these young players, so while we strive to improve the skills of the players, what is often needed most are people willing to continuously offer positive encouragement, so players keep trying to get better, they learn to embrace the challenges this game offers and hopefully they enthusiastically embrace a passion for this great game.

When these young players look back on a season, rarely is it the score of a game or wins/loses that define the success of a season but rather it is the friendships they develop, special moments with teammates and gaining the confidence to get better at something through hard work. I hope that each coach will try their best to be a positive and impactful role model for these young players and to provide them with an opportunity to enjoy the game in a fun and safe environment.

As a coach, we hope that you not only teach the game of baseball to these young players but also that you have a chance to play a role in helping them become hard-working, positive minded and confident young people.

Baseball is always willing to teach us something about life if we are willing to learn.

Thank you.

Shane Smith  
President, NWLL  
president@nwll.ca

*"You can be a kid for as long as you want when you play baseball" -- Cal Ripken Jr.*



## Why Coach

Ask any coach why they coach, and you will get a variety of answers. Reasons to coach can be anything from wanting to give back to the community or to spend quality time with their child. Regardless of the specific reason, we hope there is an element in which coaches truly enjoy it. As coaches, if we do not enjoy it, we will not be doing our best and all that we can ask of ourselves, and our players is that we try our best.

There are some coaches who truly enjoy coaching but measure their success as a coach by how successful the team is in the win/loss column. For these coaches, winning becomes the primary goal. Although winning and losing are part of the game, this must not be how we as coaches measure success.

Some coach because “someone had to step up and do it” and others volunteer because they really want to help. Either way, this is how many of us start our “coaching career”, but we continue because it is fun. There will be challenges along the way, the headaches of developing appropriate practices, managing a dug-out after the kids have had one too many Slurpees, or a sudden water fight breaks out. But we keep coming back!

As a coach, you are now responsible for the day to day running of your team. Whether it is T-ball, a travel team, or all-star team, it is yours to lead. You develop the practice schedule, plan the practices, create line-ups, ensure the diamonds are ready for home games, and make sure pitch-counts and scores are submitted. The following pages outline your role as a coach, your administrative tasks and responsibilities, rules for each level, and resources for you to access.

Just as much as NWLL wants to have players returning year after year, we hope we develop a structure and environment that makes coaches want to keep coming back and making a difference for these young baseball players.



## Getting Started

Once you receive your roster, you should begin planning your season. First, go to the NWLL website and access the diamond scheduler on the coaching page. Schedule your first few practices. Until the game schedule becomes available, you should have your team out on the diamond a few times, practicing. Make sure you schedule practices on diamonds assigned for your level of play using the online diamond scheduler found on our website.

### COACH TO-DO NEXT

1. Schedule a first practice (see Diamond Scheduler or book ABA for indoor practice)
2. Email your team
3. Secure a parent volunteer as manager ASAP
4. Email Registrar with your manager's name and contact info ASAP
5. Identify your assistant coaches and begin practice planning

### Sample Introduction Email (Minors and up)

Greetings,

My name is [name] and I will be the head coach for your child in this 2024 baseball season.

Our coaching team this year has a wide range of complementary skills, but most encouraging of all, we all share the same goals: that your player develops and improves their baseball and overall sport skills, that they enjoy being part of a team, and to further their love of the sport.

Practices will be set up shortly and communicated to the team. All players should bring a hat, glove, helmet, bat if they have one, groin protection, cleats, pants that might get holes in them, etc. Let me know if there is an issue with equipment as we do get some equipment supplied.

Games will be on [day 1] and [day 2] (with the occasional Friday or Sunday for a rain-out games). Games are at 6:30 pm. We ask players to arrive 45 minutes before each game so that we can have a proper warm-up. We will play approximately 14 games plus playoffs against teams from our own association. The season will start in late April {insert date if known} and ends late June {insert date if known}.

Volunteer opportunities for the team are available, more info to follow once I have it finalized. The first position we need to identify is a Team Manager. The Team Manager is our off-field organizer and will be responsible for things like getting our deposit cheques collected, tracking volunteer hours, picking up uniforms and other tasks required to help make the season run smoothly. Please respond to me ASAP if you are interested in being our team manager.

We will be sending you an invite for TeamSnap in the next couple of days. It will be our primary form of communication. I can also be reached at [phone]

All the best,  
[name]



The next thing is to send an email to all parents/players on your roster. This email should introduce yourself, provide a brief outline of your coaching philosophy/experience and provide the upcoming practice schedule. Your email should also inform the parents of the parent meeting you will be holding at the first practice. You should also ask for volunteers for the following parent positions for your team:

- Assistant Coaches (2) [if not already identified]
- Team Manager (1)
- Field crew (3)
- Pitch counters (minors and up)
- Scorekeepers (minors and up)

### **Assistant Coaches**

These are coaches who will help you coach the team. Rules allow a maximum of **three** coaches in the dug-out during game play at the Minors level and above. You and the two assistants you have selected will be rostered as “official” coaches on the team charter and submitted to Little League. You can have as many helpers during practices as you feel you need. However, only three coaches are allowed in the dug-out during games. Ensure that you communicate to the assistant coaches that all coaches are required to have a police check and Safe Sport Training complete.

### **Team Manager**

This is your right arm! The person in this role must be organized and able to communicate effectively. The person in this role is responsible for acting as liaison between the coaches and the parents, ensuring all team paperwork is correct and submitted on time, and ensuring/tracking volunteer commitments for your team. Note that the team manager may choose to delegate some of these duties to other team parents:

The team manager is responsible for picking up, tracking, and returning uniforms/jerseys. The team manager will ensure there are volunteers for each game, as needed.

The team manager ensures the pitch-count and score sheets are signed by both teams and enters game data into TeamSnap and/or TeamLinkt (all interlock teams) after each game. The team manager is responsible for maintaining the team pitch-count logbook, which must be at every game and made available for review upon request by any opposing team, umpire, umpire-in-chief, or other pertinent board member. This person must also maintain and track the team volunteer log.



### **Field Crew**

These three individuals are responsible for diamond preparation and set-up/take-down for each practice and game. During the regular season, T-Ball, Coach Pitch, Minors, and Majors, the home team is responsible for diamond prep and set-up, visitors are responsible for take-down after the game. For interlock, Summer Ball and Travel team play, the home team is responsible for both. For Minor level and above, the home team is responsible for ensuring there is enough chalk for the next game. If there is not enough chalk, obtain a new bag of chalk from the NWLL shed and place it in the equipment field bin at the diamond. Please reach out to NWLL for any damaged items required for diamond set-up ([operations@nwll.ca](mailto:operations@nwll.ca)).

### **Pitch Counter**

For all teams Minor level and up, a pitch counter is required. This person must accurately count every pitch thrown by each pitcher during a game, and track it accurately on the pitch count sheet. They also track the number of innings a player catches behind the plate. During game play in house league, the visiting team is the “official” pitch counter. The pitch counter is to ensure the head coach from both teams signs the form at the end of each game and provides it to the team’s manager for submission. The pitch count must be accurate as it dictates the numbers of rest days required for the player between mound appearances. This is the pitch count tracked by the association to monitor pitcher rest days to ensure proper arm care guidelines are followed. Errors in pitch counting risk injury to players and can result in sanctions against the head coach if proper rest days are not adhered to for each age.

### **Scorekeeper**

For all teams Minor level and up, a scorekeeper is required. This person must be able to keep score accurately, ensuring the batting order is followed, and tracking all substitutions. During game play in house league, the home team is the “official” scorekeeper and must ensure the score sheet is correct. Scorekeepers are to ensure the score sheet is complete and signed by both coaches at the end of each game for submission to the manager. The scorekeeper should sit in a location so they can easily communicate with the umpire. It is recommended the scorekeeper also keep score when visiting.



## Team Management

Once you have established the volunteer positions for your team, it is time for some paperwork.

All coaches should review the 2025 Little League rule book and rule updates to become familiar with all rules. Additionally, all coaches should review the NWLL rules exceptions for their age group. The rules exceptions can also be found on the NWLL website.

After reviewing your team's schedule, visit the diamond scheduler and schedule your practices for the season.

- **T-Ball:** twice weekly games will include ~45min to practice prior to the game.
- **Coach-Pitch:** twice weekly games will include ~45min to practice prior to the game. Coaches may choose to schedule one 60-minute practice per week in addition to scheduled games, but this is not an expectation, and any should be decided with agreement of the team parents.
- **Minors:** coaches are expected to have at least 1 90-to-120-minute practice per week in addition to games. A second practice is encouraged but not an expectation.
- **Major, Intermediate, Junior, and Senior:** coaches are expected to have at least 2 practices of 90-120 minutes per week in addition to games.

## Practices

All practices are scheduled by the coaches. Check the diamond scheduler for available diamonds. Schedule your practice on the diamond scheduler and inform your team. DO NOT remove another team's practice or game from the diamond scheduler. Any coach found to be removing another team's practice or game from the diamond scheduler will be immediately removed as coach.

Any available diamond is open to be used for practices, by any team. Coaches can also book time in the Batting Cage for their team, through the diamond scheduler. The diamond scheduler can be found on the NWLL website and will become available to coaches once the season schedules have been set.

## Practice Structure

Practice time is valuable as it is often a challenge during a game to adjust mechanics or implement corrective actions that require repetitive behavior to be successfully learned. Practices should be well structured and keep the kids engaged.

A sample practice plan will be made available and should you have any questions on setting up an effective practice or wish to have someone come and help run a practice, please contact the NWLL President (Shane Smith [president@nwll.ca](mailto:president@nwll.ca))



At NWLL, we subscribe to the philosophy of warming up to throw. Throwing to warmup has shown to have an increased risk of elbow and shoulder injuries because the small structures in these joints have not been properly prepared to perform the throwing actions.

At a minimum, practices should consist of the following:

- Warm-up
  - A dynamic whole-body general warm-up (light jog)
  - A dynamic whole-body specific warm-up (high knees/side shuffles/etc.)
  - Light Stretching Routine
- Throwing Warm-up
  - Progression throwing for all age groups (one knee to long toss)
- Small Session Skill Development (keep groups small and keep kids active)
  - Fielding / Batting / Pitching
- Team Session Skill Development
  - Game play instruction / Situational drills
- A scrimmage or other fun game followed by team wrap up discussion

### **Pre-Game Warm Up**

Use this valuable time to help with instruction, teaching fundamentals, and basic skill development. Do not have the players show up and start throwing a ball. Throwing prior to a proper warmup puts players at risk of injury. Every team should get a bucket of wiffle balls, as you wait for players to arrive for warm up, coaches can throw to players and use that time to get extra batting practice in prior to starting the proper warm up for the game.

- Wiffle Ball Hitting while waiting for everyone to arrive
- Warm up as a team (Run, Stretch, Throw)
- Ground balls / Fly Balls in the outfield / Warm up starting pitcher
- Start Game

### **Season Training Plan**

When developing your season plan, please refer to the NWLL Player Development Skills Analysis to ensure you are designing a season training plan that provides the players the ability to progress and develop the skills required to successfully progress to the next level.

## **Safety**

### **Safe Playing Areas**

Managers, coaches and umpires **MUST** walk the field before the start of their game. Any hazards or risks identified will be resolved before the start of the game, or before the



game can continue if a hazard is identified during play. All hazards must be identified by the home team and submitted to [operations@nwll.ca](mailto:operations@nwll.ca).

### **Safe Equipment**

At the beginning of each season, all NWLL teams will be provided with equipment that has been examined by the Vice President of Operations and/or Equipment Coordinator to ensure it complies with all Little League rules and regulations. Any equipment that becomes damaged beyond repair or falls below the standards outlined in the Little League Rule Book during the season must immediately be returned to the Equipment Coordinator for replacement.

Coaches should inspect all bats and other equipment on a regular basis. Cracked, dented or broken bats must never be used. Please refer to the [Little League bat rules](#) for more information on legal bats. Please advise your parents to not buy bats without checking the rules first.

### **Weather**

In Calgary, weather changes quickly during the spring season. A decision to postpone a game shall be made no later than 5:00 p.m. on a game day. **For House Leagues, NWLL will use TeamSnap and social media (Instagram, Facebook) to communicate whether all league play will be cancelled for the evening due to inclement weather.**

At game time or later, playability is to be determined through discussion between the head coaches of each team. The home team Head Coach is responsible for notifying UIC/Umpire Scheduler of any games postponed due to rain for the Minor Division and above. Interlock Division teams must follow the District 3 procedures as set out by the D3 administrator. For house league teams, weather delays will be made up as a league and not on a case by case basis. Interlock weather delays must be made up as per the District 3 Interlock rulebook.

### **Rain**

If it begins to rain during a game or practice:

1. Determine the direction the storm is moving
2. Evaluate the playing field as it becomes more saturated
3. During practice, if the playing conditions become unsafe, stop. During game play, consult the opposition head coach and the umpire to decide. Err on the side of caution and player safety when deciding to continue.

### **Lightning**

The average lightning strike is 8km long with up to 30 million volts at 100,000 amps flowing in less than 1/10 of a second. The average thunderstorm is 10km wide and moves at a rate of 40km/hr. Once the leading edge of a thunderstorm



is within 16km, you are in immediate risk of a lightning strike. This fact is the reason many lightning deaths and injuries occur with clear skies overhead.

If you hear thunder, the storm is within 5km of your location. Halt your activities immediately and seek shelter. Safe shelter is ideally any substantial building. A hard topped metal vehicle with the windows rolled up is a second option. **Dug-outs, sheds etc. are not safe. You cannot return to play until 30 minutes after the last lightning/thunder.**

### **Concussions**

A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury caused by the brain being shaken around in the skull after a direct blow. Loss of consciousness does not have to occur to have a concussion. Some will have signs of a concussion immediately, others will not.

The risk of complications such as bleeding or swelling in the brain is higher during the first 24-48 hours after the injury. However, complications can occur weeks later. Call 911 or go to the hospital right away if:

1. The player becomes more confused, restless or agitated
2. The player becomes less alert
3. The player has the worst headache they have ever had.
4. Blood or fluid is coming out of the nose or ears, or there is bruising around the eyes or ears.
5. Loss of vision, blurry vision, double vision.
6. Slurred speech or difficulty speaking
7. Sudden weakness on one side of the body
8. More than 2 episodes of uncontrolled or forceful vomiting that will not stop
9. Seizure activity

### **First Aid Kits**

A first aid kit will be available in all NWLL diamond bins. For any teams playing outside NWLL home diamonds, please arrange to have a first aid kit provided to you from NWLL. Please ensure the first aid kit is readily accessible for all NWLL practices and games.



## **Summer Ball (All-Stars)**

NWLL offers a Summer Ball program following the completion of the regular season. Players are selected on a try-out basis and all players are encouraged to attend. The summer baseball league runs through July and early August, with the opportunity to attend various district, regional, and national tournaments into August, and perhaps the Little League World Series! Depending on interest, NWLL can enter as many teams as we can. The season provides a series of seeding tournaments to ensure each team is playing at the level most suited for their skill set.

Players must play in 60% of the regular spring season games to be eligible to play Summer Baseball.

The summer baseball season is a great experience and provides players an opportunity to play another level of baseball. It is important to know there is a level of commitment required at this level which differs from the regular spring season. Players can be on the diamond up to 6 days per week. The summer league is more competitive and structured differently than the regular spring season. Unlike the spring season, which focuses on giving every player the opportunity to play multiple positions, coaches will set the batting line-up and defensive positioning they feel will give the team a competitive advantage. All players will be provided the opportunity to play but the fair play rule as stated by Little League International is any tournament team with a roster of up to 12 players must provide each player with a minimum of six defensive outs and one at-bat per game. For teams with rosters of more than 12 players, each player must be provided the opportunity for one at-bat. Specific substitution rules determine how and when substitutions occur.

For the All-Stars season, there is an additional fee to pay that is set by NWLL. Each player will be provided a Summer Ball hat and shirt. Additional costs may be associated with any tournament play and are the responsibility of each team. Coaches wishing to take a team to a tournament must make an application to the NWLL President. Following approval by the NWLL president, approval is then required by the district and the region. Turn-around timelines for this is a minimum of one week.

### **Player Expectations**

- Practices are held 2-3 days per week, at the Coach's discretion, from mid-June through the end of July. Additional practices into August will be determined by team success, and tournament play.
- Games are played any day of the week, with multiple games per week anticipated, including weekends. Games can be scheduled on back-to-back days.
- Players will come to practices and games with a positive attitude and always demonstrate exceptional sportsmanship.



- Parent volunteer commitments are required for pitch-count, score keeping, diamond set-up/tear down at home games etc.

### **Player Selection Process and Criteria**

Selection criteria includes eligibility, ability, skill, and desire. A player's behavior throughout the entire spring-season is also considered, as well as positive attitude, sportsmanship, teamwork and regular participation. Parents will be asked to confirm player availability at the beginning of tryouts. Although player availability is an important part of the selection process, it should not deter any player from considering the summer baseball program or attending the tryouts as there is opportunity for some flexibility by the team coaches.

### **Tryout Schedule**

Little League International states no summer ball team can be established until June 1, 2025. Because of these rules, All-Star tryouts will be scheduled by the board of directors and posted on our website.

Any coaches interested in participating in the Summer Ball programs please speak with the VP Operations or the President at your earliest opportunity.



## Long Term Athlete Development

NWLL subscribes to a philosophy of athlete development which is a systematic approach to maximize a participant's involvement in our sport. This framework aims to define optimal training, competition and recovery throughout an athlete's career to provide them the opportunity to reach his/her full potential in baseball and as an athlete. Tailoring a child's sport development to suite basic principles of growth and maturation enables them to reach their full potential and increase lifelong participation in baseball as well as other physical activities.

This model is divided into stages in which participants will move from simple to more complex skills. It is based on a combination of scientific research and knowledge of coaches and is focused on common, key principles of individual development which many sporting organizations consider to be best practice.

During the initial stages of this program, the emphasis is on physical literacy. Time is spent on learning the basics of athleticism (Agility, Balance, Coordination and Speed). This teaches the participants how to control their own bodies. In these stages, you may incorporate activities and drills which may not "look" relevant to baseball but are supporting the child's development. During these initial stages, it is important you work on developing a participant's Baseball IQ. Each year of participation from T-Ball through to the Senior program builds and adds to the child's development and provides them the opportunity for life-long participation.

<i>The first three Long-Term Athlete Development stages encourage physical literacy and sport for all:</i>	<i>The next three stages focus on excellence:</i>	<i>The final stage encourages lifelong physical activity:</i>
1. Active Start  2. FUNdamentals  3. Learn to Train	4. Train to Train  5. Train to Compete  6. Train to Win	7. Active for life  a. Competitive for Life  b. Fit for Life  c. Sport and Physical Activity Leaders

### **10 Key Factors for LTAD**

1. **Physical literacy:** The foundation of both participation and excellence in physical activity and sport. Individuals who are physically literate are more likely to be active for life



2. **Specialization:** Sports can be classified as either early or late specialization. Well-known early specialization sports include artistic and acrobatic sports such as gymnastics, diving and figure skating. These differ from late specialization sports such as baseball in that very complex skills are learned before maturation because they cannot be fully mastered if taught after maturation.
3. **Developmental Age:** Children of the same chronological age can differ by several years in their level of biological maturation.
4. **Sensitive periods:** A broad time frame of opportunity when the learning of a specific skill or the development of a specific physical capacity is particularly effective. The entire period of childhood is viewed as a sensitive period for mastering fundamental movement skills.
5. **Mental, Cognitive and Emotional Development:** Mental, cognitive and emotional factors are essential to each athlete's development. Not only is holistic development – which encompasses all of these factors, in addition to physical development – beneficial to the individual, but all of these skill sets are interlinked.
6. **Periodization:** Simply put, periodization is time management. As a planning technique, it provides the framework for arranging the complex array of training processes into a logical and scientifically based schedule to bring about optimal improvements in performance.
7. **Competition:** Optimal competition calendar planning at all stages is critical to athlete development. At certain stages, developing the physical capacities take precedence over competition. At later stages, the ability to compete well becomes the focus.
8. **Excellence Takes Time:** It has been suggested that it takes 10,000 hours of training and competing for an athlete to reach the top of their game. This is 8-12 years of practice. There are no shortcuts.
9. **System Alignment and Integration:** The relationship between all level of sport and physical activity between schools, sport clubs, and provincial/national sport organizations from policy to program delivery.
10. **Continuous Improvement:** The Long-Term Athlete Development framework is based on the principle of continuous improvement, both in its dynamic evolution and in its application.

For more information on LTAD, please visit [Long-Term Development - Sport for Life](#)



## **Coach Development**

NWLL is able to provide support to assist coaches in technical, tactical and theory of coaching baseball, including an in-person coaching clinic and online resources. Reach out to NWLL via the [president](#) or [vice president operations](#) for assistance with practice planning, player development and understanding how to manage dug-outs, rosters, line-ups and pitching rotations.

In addition, NCCP coach certification programs are available and encouraged. To enroll in this program, coaches are required to register with NCCP at [www.nccp.baseball.ca](http://www.nccp.baseball.ca).

## **Additional Coaching Resources**

### **Drills**

<https://usabdevelops.com/page/1363/drills>

### **Practice Plans**

<https://usabdevelops.com/page/1524/practice-plans>

### **Skill Progression**

<https://usabdevelops.com/page/5007/youth-baseball-skills-matrix>

### **Big Al Baseball Training & Development Center**

<https://bigalbaseball.com/>

### **National Coaching Certification Program**

<https://coach.ca/national-coaching-certification-program>

### **Baseball Canada Long Term Athlete Development**

[Big\\_Document\\_1-19\\_3rd.pdf \(baseball.ca\)](#)

### **Little League University – Resources for Coaches**

[Coaches - Little League](#)

### **Practice Tips & Drills (12 Week Program)**

<https://www.littleleague.org/downloads/coach-pitch-12-week-program/>

### **Practice Tips & Drills**

[Little League Baseball Drills - Baseball Tutorials \(baseball-tutorials.com\)](#)