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Dear Start Smart Instructor:

Thank you for accepting the position of Start Smart Instructor. This manual will give you detailed instructions on how to run your program.

As you may know, well-meaning volunteer youth league coaches do not always have the time or expertise to teach children the basic motor skills that they need to be successful in sports. Start Smart teaches children the skills that they need to play organized sports in a FUN, non-competitive environment.

The Start Smart Sports Development Program was originally developed based on a 1993 study showing that 49% of children participating in organized sports do not have the minimum motor skills necessary to be successful in those programs. The same study also showed that children who are given proper motor skills instructions in a fun, supervised setting are more likely to be ready for organized sports. In addition to our general motor skills development program, we have created sport-specific programs to focus on the specific skills needed for future participation in particular sports.

Thank you again for bringing Start Smart to your Army Garrison. If you have any questions about the program or this manual, please call us at 1-800-729-2057.

Sincerely,

The Start Smart Sports Development Programs Staff

P.S. Please notify our national office of the start date for your program and send us pictures from your sessions.
Table of Contents

Introduction
  What is the Start Smart Baseball Program?..........................Page 1
  The Start Smart Mission..................................................Page 1
  Who is the National Alliance for Youth Sports?......................Page 1
  Why Start Smart?..........................................................Page 1
  References...................................................................Page 2
  What about the Products?...............................................Page 2
  Program Guidelines.....................................................Page 3

The Start Smart Instructor
  What are your Responsibilities.......................................Page 4
  Program Checklist........................................................Page 4
  Materials Checklist.......................................................Page 5
  Promotional Tips..........................................................Page 6
  Frequently Asked Questions..........................................Page 7

Program Format
  Sample Schedule..........................................................Page 8
    Week 1: Sports Readiness Pre-Assessment & Sample Schedule....Page 8
    Weeks 2-6: Skill Development Exercises............................Page 9
  Skill Development Exercises ..........................................Page 11
    Week 1...................................................................Page 11
    Week 2..................................................................Page 12
    Week 3..................................................................Page 14
    Week 4..................................................................Page 16
    Week 5..................................................................Page 18
    Week 6..................................................................Page 20

Appendix
  Performance Cues Posters..............................................Page A1
  Sample Floor Plan.........................................................Page A2
  Sample Promotional Flier...............................................Page A3
  Sample Press Release....................................................Page A4
  Instructor Survey........................................................Page A5
  Participant Roster........................................................Page A6
Introduction

What is the Start Smart Baseball?
Start Smart Baseball, a program of the National Alliance for Youth Sports, teaches children (ages 3-7) the basic motor skills necessary to play organized baseball while they work one-on-one with a member of your staff. The program focuses on teaching children basic sports mechanics without the threat of competition or the fear of getting hurt. Start Smart Baseball sessions are held once or twice a week for three to six weeks. Each week, the exercises become increasingly more difficult as the class progresses and the children show improvement.

The Start Smart Mission
The Start Smart Sports Development Programs were created to teach children the basic motor skills necessary to participate in organized sports while giving them the opportunity to work one-on-one with an adult. The programs were developed to be informative and fun, so children will have a positive first time sports experience and continue participating in sports beyond this introductory level.

Who is the National Alliance for Youth Sports?
Formed in West Palm Beach, Florida in 1981 the “Alliance” was originally developed as a volunteer youth sport coaches certification system (NYSCA) with a simple mission: to make youth sports fun and safe for kids. Since 1981, the nonprofit association has developed into a diverse organization with a number of national programs and accredited chapters in all fifty states. The programs offered by the Alliance include: the National Youth Sports Coaches and Officials Association, the National Academy for Youth Sports Administrators, Parents Association for Youth Sports, the Start Smart Development Programs and Hook A Kid On Golf. These programs are administered by the Alliance’s two divisions; Education and Youth Development.

While the Education division concentrates on programs that educate adults, the Youth Development division focuses on programs that deal directly with children. Specifically, the Youth Development division develops programs that build proficiency and confidence that youngsters need to participate and remain active in sports by 1) offering programs that teach the basic motor skills necessary for meaningful sports participation, 2) generating interest in lifetime activities and 3) providing a healthy fitness attitude for life. The Start Smart Sports Development Program, along with the other Start Smart programs, is administered through the Youth Development division of the National Alliance for Youth Sports.

Why Start Smart?
Before entering organized youth sports programs, children need to master the fundamental motor skills that serve as a basis for more complex sports skills. Children do not effectively learn these skills by playing games, but rather by practicing developmentally appropriate activities.
Developmentally appropriate activities are tasks designed for the child’s current level of performance ability while using equipment that enables the child to be successful. Success is extremely important in early motor skill learning experiences, as it builds self-esteem and the motivation and confidence needed to try and improve.

Children who enter youth sports programs with fundamental motor skills and confidence in their ability to perform are much more likely to learn new and more complex sport-specific skills, achieve success in competition, and enjoy a positive sports experience. These children are also more likely to participate in sports and fitness activities as adults.

All children should be provided with effective, developmentally appropriate activities and equipment to prepare them for future organized sports and fitness opportunities. Start Smart accomplishes this by offering programs that encourage children to participate in youth sports without the threat of competition or the fear of getting hurt.

References
The Start Smart Baseball developmental tasks and program guidelines were developed by motor skill development specialists from Northern Kentucky University. The program is based on the research findings (Kirk, 1993), practices of effective motor development teachers and programs (Graham, Holt/Hale & Parker, 1993), and is influenced by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education’s Council on Physical Education for Children’s Position Statement: “Developmentally appropriate physical education practices for children” (1991). And the following publications:


What about the products?
The 1993 study at Northern Kentucky University showed that children ages 5-10 participating in a motor skill development program improved at a greater rate while using specialized equipment as opposed to traditional elementary physical education equipment. The products used in the Start Smart programs are the most innovative available and are developmentally appropriate for teaching youngsters the basic motor skills that are emphasized in the program. The Start Smart Baseball program utilizes developmentally appropriate products from the following companies:
**Program Guidelines**
The following guidelines should be emphasized during your Start Smart Baseball program to ensure that the children obtain high levels of achievement and success during the program. Staff members should be aware of the guidelines at all times while working on basic motor skill development with children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Positive Learning Environment:</strong></th>
<th>Children must be provided with a positive non-threatening learning environment where they receive a great deal of encouragement and success.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children are Unique:</strong></td>
<td>All children are unique and learn at different rates. It takes them much effort and many practice trials to improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maximum Involvement:</strong></td>
<td>Each child needs the opportunity to practice skills learned. START SMART activities are organized to provide children optimal time to practice skills at the same time. To maximize individual practice time, equipment is provided for each instructor-child group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Success is Important:</strong></td>
<td>The child should experience high success rates on a task. Modify the task if it is difficult for the child to succeed. Once success is attained, increase the difficulty of the task incrementally. An example of modifying a task is changing the distance that a ball must travel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appropriate Equipment:</strong></td>
<td>The equipment must be developmentally appropriate for the child. Start Smart provides equipment that is the appropriate size and weight for this age group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keep it simple:</strong></td>
<td>Children are not “little adults” and they learn and comprehend differently than adults. In the early learning stages, keep it simple by demonstrating exactly what you want them to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Feedback:</strong></td>
<td>Clear, concise, positive feedback from the staff regarding the child’s performance and effort will enhance learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expert Success:</strong></td>
<td>All kids need a lot of encouragement and a feeling that your only expectations are that they learn and improve. If you expect success, the children will have the confidence to believe that they are capable of succeeding in the particular task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complete Tasks Before Continuing:</strong></td>
<td>Start Smart activities are organized from simple to more complex. A child should complete one task successfully before moving on to the next exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Review Tasks:</strong></td>
<td>Children will benefit from reviewing previously completed tasks. This practice is especially helpful if they are having difficulty with the task at hand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Start Smart Baseball Instructor

What are your Responsibilities?
As the Start Smart Baseball Instructor, you are the key to the success of your program! We recommend that you, the Child Development Center (CDC) Training and Curriculum Specialist, CDC Lead or Mentor, or Child and Youth Program Assistant (CYPA), and volunteers assigned to implement the Start Smart program familiarize yourself with all of the program materials prior to running Start Smart for the first time.

You can use the instructor manual to successfully implement your Start Smart program. This Start Smart Instructor Manual should be used in conjunction with the Skill Guide that you received with your Start Smart Starter Kit.

Program Checklist
Below is a checklist of your responsibilities as a Start Smart Baseball Instructor. Each item refers to a subject covered later in the manual. We recommend using the checklist as a timeline while working toward your program start date.

- Review Start Smart Baseball Instructor Manual
- Review the Materials Checklist (page 5) to assure that you have received all of the equipment in your Starter Kit.
- Establish a location for your program (CDC/SAS multi-purpose room or outdoor area).
- Develop Start Smart Implementation Plan.
- Schedule Smart Start into the CDC or SAS Daily Activities Plans.
- Recruit parent and teen volunteers to assist with the program.
- Order any additional materials from the National Office 3 weeks prior to the start of your program.
- Gather the additional program materials needed for your program (page 5).
- Implement Start Smart by following the Program Format (page 8) in this manual.
Materials Checklist
The Start Smart Baseball Starter Kit. Includes the following items:

- 2-Instructor Manual
- 2-Skill Guide
- 1-Model Youth Sports Parent Video
- 1-Carry-All Bag
- 1-Bat and Ball Set
- 4-Batting Tees
- 1-Glove (LH)

Don’t Forget: Check to see if you have all the equipment needed to start your program!

Additional Programs Materials You May Need
The following is a list of materials that you may need to run your Start Smart Baseball program. You most likely will already have some of these materials and most of them can be substituted by using other items.

- balloons
- duct or masking tape
- poster board
- table and chairs (for sign-in)
- name tags
- first-aid kit
- marker cones
- clothes line rope
- hula hoops
- plastic milk or soda containers
Promotional Tips
The following checklist will ensure the success of Start Smart Baseball in your centers for years to come.

Before your program begins:
- Coordinate with your Public Affairs Office (PAO) or (MWR) Marketing Office to:
  ~ Daily and weekly local newspapers.
  ~ Local Radio Stations that may run public service announcements.
  ~ Local cable television stations that run public service announcements.

  Note: The national office can also provide you with a press release if needed!

- Distribute a promotional flier (see sample on page A4) to:
  ~ Local youth sports leagues
  ~ Public libraries
  ~ Schools
  ~ Day care facilities
  ~ Community centers

During your program:
- Contact daily newspapers to remind them of the program and encourage them to send a staff writer and a photographer.
- Contact weekly newspapers in your community to let them know that the program is being held (many weeklies prefer having the story done for them since most are under staffed; the national office can provide help with a story).
- Contact all television stations’ news and sports directors to get additional coverage. Local radio and television talk shows may be interested in having the Start Smart Baseball Instructor on the show with some parents, kids, etc. to talk about the program.
Frequently Asked Questions

When is the best time to conduct a Start Smart Baseball Program?
Smart Start Baseball can be run anytime, but you may want to consider running your program as a developmental program prior to the next scheduled baseball season. This would enable those children who would like to participate in the next season to prepare themselves in advance. The Sports Readiness Assessment will enable parents to recognize if their child is ready for organized baseball. Smart Start Baseball is recommended for children between the ages of 3-7 years old.

Where can I implement my Start Smart Baseball Program?
Start Smart Baseball can be run indoors or outside with the equipment that is included in your Starter Kit. If you are planning to hold your program outdoors, you need to consider variables like the weather, time changes in the spring and fall, and insects. Please remember - some of the Start Smart exercises require the use of a wall as a target.

How do I recruit parent and teen volunteers to assist with Start Smart?
Advertise at the front desk, Central Enrollment and Registration (CER), through the Parent Advisory Council, at the youth center and ask during sports registration sign-up, bearing in mind that many parents are apprehensive to coach a team but may be interested in teaching a skill development program.

Some questions that may be asked from parents during your program:

What if my child’s attention span prompts him/her to want to move to the next station before the instructor gives the signal?
For a program comprised of mostly young children, where attention spans are generally very short, you may want to decrease the time at each station to 7 or 8 minutes (rather than the 10 minutes, as specified in the program format).

Is the child ready to play in an organized youth sports league once he/she has finished the Start Smart Baseball program?
Refer to the “Interpreting Assessment” section in the back of the Skill Guide. However, it is important to remember that even if a child proves to be physically ready to participate in organized sports, he or she may not be emotionally ready. This decision should be based on both the physical and emotional development of the child. The National Alliance for Youth Sports recommends that children should not be involved in competitive sports before the age of eight.
Section 3 - Program Format

The following is a standard schedule for Start Smart. The 3/6 weeks of staff-child instruction should be scheduled for 1/2/3 days per week, and each session should last approximately one hour. The ratios are 1/10 in CDC and 1/15 in SAS:

Standard Start Smart Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1:</td>
<td>Sports Readiness Assessment and Skill Development Exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 2-5:</td>
<td>Skill Development Exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6:</td>
<td>Skill Development Exercises, Mock Game and Post Assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Schedule - Week 1

Child Assessment and Exercise #1

*For example, if your class starts at 9 am…*

8:30 am: Set-Up
- Set-up your room with the four skill-assessment stations. Please see the sample floor plan (page A3) for how each skill area is set-up for the assessment.
- *Performance Cues* posters should be placed in a visible spot at each station.
- Appoint volunteers to specific stations to assist the participant groups.
- Set-up a check-in table with attendance sheets (class rosters) and nametags.
- Before the class begins, divide the children into equal groups according to the participating child’s age. (i.e. all of the 4-year-olds in one group)

8:45-9:00 am: Check-In
- Have the participants check-in and receive a nametag.

9:00-9:10 pm: Instructor (CDC/SAS-Assigned Staff) Welcomes Participants and Conducts the Start Smart Program Assessment
- Before administering the Sports Readiness Assessment, explain to the staff members that the assessment is ONLY an evaluation for them to gage the progress of the child. The assessment is **NOT used to rank or score any of the children, and the scores are only for the staff to see.**
- Have the participants turn to the assessment section of the Skill Guide.
- Explain to participants that they have 5-6 minutes at each skill station for assessment. If possible, there should be a volunteer at each skill station to demonstrate each task with the proper equipment.
- At this time, separate the staff/child groups into equal groups and assign them to a station.
9:10-9:35 am: Conduct Readiness Test
- Have staff/child groups rotate every 5-6 minutes from one station to the next, performing the assessment that is explained in the skill guide.

9:35-10:00 am: WEEK 1 Exercises
- After the assessment is complete, have the groups rotate through the stations again and perform the skill development exercises for WEEK 1 (page 11) for each of the skill areas. Spend 5-6 minutes in each station.

10:00 am: Wrap Up
- Before the children are dismissed, explain the format of the program for the upcoming weeks. This is also a good time to answer any questions.

Sample Schedule - Weeks 2-6

Skill Development Sessions

8:30 am: Set-Up
- Set-up your room already set-up with the four skill stations.
- Display *Performance Cues* posters in a visible spot.
- Set-up a check-in table with attendance sheets and nametags.

8:45-9:00 am: Check-In
- Have the participants check-in and receive a nametag.

9:00-9:10am: Preview
The Start Smart Instructor (CDC TACS, Mentor, Lead or CDC/SAS CYPA) previews the program. Include the following:

- Show each exercise for the appropriate week at the skill stations with the suggested equipment.
- Study and instruct volunteers on how to review the Performance Cues with the child and how to use the Performance Cues as praise when the child performs the exercise correctly.
- Remind staff members that tasks may be altered (adjust the distance, etc.) to make the skill easier or more difficult to suit each child’s ability.
- If a 1/10 ratio exists, then work one station at a time. If you have parent or teen volunteers, you can have the participants split into groups and rotate stations. Pay special attention to each child’s skill level in the first few weeks. Throughout the course of the program, an effort should be made to group children that have similar skill levels.
9:10-9:20 am: Begin Skill Development Exercises
- As the Start Smart Instructor, you should monitor all skill stations. If enough volunteers are not available, the instructor will need to run one station at a time.
- Each skill should be reviewed with the staff/child groups before they actually begin the tasks. Staff members should concentrate on proper execution of the Performance Cues by the children, and not necessarily the results.
- The Start Smart Instructor needs to continuously remind staff members of the importance of the posted Performance Cues and of giving positive feedback to the children.

9:20-10:00 am: Rotate to all Stations
- Rotate through the rest of the stations, switching every 10 minutes.

10:00 am: Wrap Up
- Before the staff/child groups are dismissed, answer any questions that they may have.
- Encourage the children to practice at home.
- Discuss what skills will be learned the following week.

Special Note for WEEK 6: Give the children enough time to complete the Start Smart Assessment again to see what progress the child has made since week 1. Tell the staff members to record the child’s score in the “Post Assessment” column of the scoring sheet in their Skill Guide. Again, this assessment is ONLY an evaluation to gage the progress of the child. The assessment is NOT used to rank or score any child, and the scores are for the staff eyes only.
Skill Development Exercises - Week 1

Station #1 - Throwing
Throwing at a Large Target
*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls and Masking Tape*
Mark a line 5 feet away from a large target such as a wall. Have the children stand on a marked line and throw a Koosh Ball overhand at the target area. Do not emphasize accuracy, but rather distance. Remind the volunteers to emphasize the Performance Cues. When the child is able to get 8 out of 10 balls to reach the target, increase the distance the child is standing in 5 foot increments.

Station #2 - Catching
Catching a Ball Rolled by a Partner
*Equipment Needed: Foam Balls*
The child stands across from a staff member/volunteer, who slowly rolls a small foam ball on the ground to the child. Remind the volunteers to emphasize the Performance Cues. The child bends down and catches the ball with both hands, then slowly rolls the ball back to the staff member/volunteer. Each child should successfully catch the ball 8 out of 10 times.

Station #3 - Batting
Batting a Stationary Ball Off a Tee
*Equipment Needed: Batting Tees, Bats, Foam Balls and Masking Tape*
Set up batting tees and mark a line 15 feet away. Have each child use the bat to hit a ball off the tee so that the ball travels in the air and lands beyond the line. Increase the distance that the ball must travel when the child is able to hit the ball beyond the line 8 out of 10 times.

Station #4 – Running/Agility
Run and Change Directions on a Signal
*Equipment Needed: None*
Have the child begin running and on a staff member’s call, the child will be told to cut to the right or to the left. As the child improves, have him/her turn around and look at his/her partner after making each cut while still running (as if he/she was going to catch a ball).
Skill Development Exercises - Week 2

Station #1 - Throwing

Throwing Overhand for Distance

*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls and Masking Tape*

Mark off a throwing line and lines at increments of 5 feet. Have the child throw a *Koosh Ball* overhand 10 times trying to get 8 out of 10 balls to land beyond the appropriate line and continue on at five feet increments as success is achieved at each distance.

Throwing Overhand for Accuracy at a Smaller Target

*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls, Masking Tape*

Designate a large target area (8 feet x 8 feet) with tape on a wall or other surface and mark off a throwing line an appropriate distance away and at 5 foot increments. Have the child use a *Koosh Ball* to throw overhand at the target. When successful 8 out of 10 times, have the child move back 5 feet and repeat.

Station #2 - Catching

Catching a Self Tossed Ball

*Equipment Needed: Balloons and Koosh Balls*

Using first a balloon and then a *Koosh Ball*, the child tosses the ball in the air just above the head, then catches it at waist level. After successfully completing 8 out of 10 catches, have the child toss the ball higher, reaching up and catching it above their head. Repeat the activity, with the child jumping up to catch the ball as high as possible.

Catching a Ball Tossed by a Partner

*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls*

Have each child stand across from a staff member/volunteer. Encourage the staff member/volunteer to softly toss the *Koosh Ball* underhand in a slight arc to the child. After the child can catch the ball with both hands 8 out of 10 times, increase the distance, speed and arc of the ball in gradual increments to increase difficulty.

*Week 2 Continues…*
Skill Development Exercises

**Station #3 - Batting**

**Striking a Ball Off a Batting Tee to a Marked Area**

*Equipment Needed: Batting Tees, Masking Tap (or a rope), Bats, Foam Balls*

Set up batting tees 15 feet from a wall, and make 3 circles on the wall with masking tape (or a rope). Have each child attempt to hit the ball off the batting tee to the designated area. The parent will ask the child to hit the right, left, or center circle. Increase the distance that the ball must travel after the child can successfully hit the ball into the appropriate circle 8 out of 10 times.

**Striking a Suspended Ball With a Bat**

*Equipment Needed: Bats, Koosh Balls and String (Stick or Pole optional)*

Tie a Koosh Ball to a rope and hang it from the ceiling or tie it to the end of a pole. Make sure that the ball is at the child’s waist level and is stationary. Encourage the child to stand behind and to the side of the ball, a bat’s length away. The child should successfully hit the ball 8 out of 10 times.

**Station #4 – Running/Agility**

**Line and Slide Back-and-Forth**

*Equipment Needed: None*

Have the participants stand in a line. Have the entire line practice sliding back-and-forth to the right and left. As the child becomes proficient, have him/her slide 4 times, then make a half turn, and slide 4 times again and turn.

**Run Around and Dodge Obstacles**

*Equipment Needed: Cones*

The child will run around an obstacle course or figure 8 set up by the instructor. As the child improves, ask him/her to increase his/her speed.
Skill Development Exercises - Week 3

**Station #1 - Throwing**

**Throwing Overhand for Accuracy at a Smaller Target**

*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls, Masking Tape and Hula Hoops (optional)*

Put Hula Hoops or taped circles on a wall (3 feet from the ground) and mark a starting line 5 feet away. The child will throw a Koosh Ball overhand at the Hula Hoop or taped circle. After throwing 8 out of 10 balls inside the circle, encourage the children to move back 5 feet and repeat.

**Throwing to a Partner**

*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls and Masking Tape*

Mark 2 lines, 10 feet apart and have a staff member/volunteer behind the first line and the child standing behind the second line. Encourage them to play throw and catch with a Koosh Ball. After the child completes 8 out of 10 throws and catches successfully, the staff member/volunteer moves back at 5 foot increments. Repeat at the next line back and as the child is successful, increase the height and speed of throws.

**Station #2 - Catching**

**Catching a Rolling Ball**

*Equipment Needed: Foam Balls*

Have each child roll the Foam Ball slowly away from him/herself, run ahead, get in front of the ball, and bend down and catch the ball with both hands. Encourage each child to complete 8 out of 10 catches successfully.

**Catching a Ball as it Rebounds from a Wall**

*Equipment Needed: Foam Balls and Gloves*

Have each child stand 10 feet from the wall and have them throw the Foam Ball at the wall so that it rebounds and then bounces on the ground between them and the wall. The child should catch the ball with a glove as it bounces from the floor. With success, repeat moving farther from the wall and throwing the ball harder.

*Week 3 Continues…*
**Station #3 - Batting**  
*Batting a Moving Suspended Ball*

*Equipment Needed: Bats, Koosh Ball and String (Stick or Pole Optional)*

Tie a *Koosh Ball* from a rope and hang it from the ceiling or tie it to the end of a pole. Make sure that the *Koosh Ball* hangs at about the waist-level of the child. The staff member/volunteer holds the suspended *Koosh Ball*, moves back from the batter, holds the ball up, and then releases it so that it moves at the same speed and at the same arc each time. The batter strikes the ball with the bat, as the ball approaches the strike area, hitting the ball away, 8 out of 10 times.

**Hit a Slowly Moving Large Balloon with a Bat**

*Equipment Needed: Bats and Balloons*

Give each child a bat and have them stand across from a staff member/volunteer. Encourage the staff member/volunteer to slowly toss a large balloon to the strike area so the child can successfully hit the balloon 8 out of 10 times. As the child shows improvement, have the staff member/volunteer take a few stops backwards to increase difficulty.

**Station #4 – Running/Agility**

*Skip Forward, Backwards, in a Circle or in Different Directions*

*Equipment Needed: None*

Children may need to practice hopping first. Then, on a staff member’s call, the child will try skipping right, left, backwards or in a circle (whichever direction the staff member calls).

**Jump!**

*Equipment Needed: Balloons*

A staff member/volunteer will toss a balloon high in the air and the child will jump up as high as he/she can to catch it.
Skill Development Exercises - Week 4

Station #1 - Throwing
Throwing for Accuracy at Two Smaller Targets
*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls, Hula Hoops, Masking Tape*
Prop, tape or tie Hula Hoops in sets of two in a vertical position 3 feet above the ground, and space the hoops 2 feet apart from each other. Mark a starting line 5 feet from the hoops and have each child begin throwing 10 times at the hoops, alternating between the right hoop and then the left hoop, getting 4 out of 5 in each hoop. As the child improves, encourage him/her to move back at 5 feet increments.

Throwing Underhand to a Target for Accuracy
*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls, Masking Tape, and Hula Hoops (optional)*
Mark a starting line and put Hula Hoops (or taped circles) on the ground 5 feet away. Have the children stand on the starting line and throw a Koosh Ball underhand so that it lands inside the Hula Hoops (or taped circles) 8 out of 10 times. Remind the volunteers to emphasize the *Performance Cues*. Encourage the child to move back at five-foot increments as he/she achieves success.

Station #2 - Catching
Catching a Ground Ball
*Equipment Needed: Foam Balls and Gloves*
Have each child stand across from a staff member/volunteer. Encourage the staff member/volunteer to softly roll the Foam Ball to the child. As the child fields the ball, he/she throws it quickly back to the staff member/volunteer. Use gloves in this activity as the child gains confidence.

Moving to Catch a Ground Ball
*Equipment Needed: Foam Balls and Gloves*
Have each child stand across from a staff member/volunteer. Encourage the staff member/volunteer to softly roll the Foam Ball to the child, but for this activity the staff member/volunteer rolls the ball alternating to the right and left of the child so that he/she must shuffle one or two steps to either side to field the ball. Use gloves in this activity as the child gains confidence.

*Week 4 Continues…*
**Station #3 - Kicking**

**Striking a Small Ball Tossed from the Front with a Bat**

*Equipment Needed: Bat and Koosh Balls*

The tosser stands in front of the batter, 10 feet away, and softly tosses the Koosh Ball in a horizontal direction to the striking area, so that the batter can hit the ball successfully 8 out of 10 times.

**Striking a Small Ball Tossed from the Side with a Bat**

*Equipment Needed: Bat and Koosh Balls*

Have a staff member/volunteer stand to the side of the child (approximately 5 feet away) and softly toss a Koosh Ball so that the batter can strike the ball into the designated area. The child should be able to complete 8 out of 10 times. Repeat, requiring the batter to hit the ball a farther distance.

**Station #4 – Running/Agility**

**Run Backwards and Sideways**

*Equipment Needed: Masking Tape or Cones*

The child will practice running backwards for 20-50 feet from a starting point. Have the child then practice running sideways, right, and then left. As the child improves his/her skills, have him/her increase his/her speed.

**Grapevine**

*Equipment Needed: None*

Have the child do a “grapevine” sideways across the floor by taking a step to the side with his/her right foot, crossing over the right leg with his/her left foot, stepping to the side again with the right foot, and then crossing behind the right leg with his/her left foot (step, cross over, step, cross behind). Repeat to the left. As the child improves, have him/her increase their speed.
Skill Development Exercises - Week 5

Station #1 - Throwing
Throwing for Accuracy at Multiple Small Targets
*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls, Small Table, Plastic Bottles*
Place 5 plastic milk jugs or soft drink containers 6 inches apart on a table or bench. Have the child throw *Koosh Balls* over and underhand from a line 5 feet away. The object is to hit all 5 jugs in as few throws as possible. When the child is able to achieve this task in 6 throws, challenge him/her to move further back and try again.

Throwing to a Moving Target both Underhand and Overhand
*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls*
Have each child stand across from a staff member/volunteer. The child will throw the *Koosh Ball* to the staff member/volunteer as the staff member/volunteer runs to the right. The child should throw 8 out of 10 times so that the staff member/volunteer has a good chance of catching the ball. Repeat with the staff member/volunteer running to the left, and then back away from the thrower. Complete 8 out of 10 successful throws for each situation. Then repeat, increasing the distance by 5 feet.

Station #2 - Catching
Catching Fly Balls
*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls and Gloves*
Have a staff member/volunteer and child stand 15 feet apart and encourage the staff member/volunteer to throw a *Koosh Ball* in a high arc to the child. The staff member/volunteer increases the distance at increments of 10 feet after the child catches 8 out of 10. Continue this task as the child continues to achieve success, by increasing distance and changing the speed and arc of the ball. Add a glove as the child gains confidence.

Moving to the Right and Left to Catch Fly Balls
*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls and Gloves*
Give each child a glove and give each staff member/volunteer a

The child moves to the right a step or two, to catch the fly ball that was thrown to the right by the staff member/volunteer who is standing 15 feet away. Then complete the same task to the left. Complete 8 out of 10 successfully, and as the child achieves success, increase the distance and arc of the flight of the ball and mix up the throws to the right and left sides of the child.

*Week 5 Continues…*
Station #3 - Batting
Striking a Small Ball Tossed from a Longer Distance, with a Bat
*Equipment Needed: Bats and Foam Balls*
A staff member/volunteer tosses the ball from 20 feet away to the child, so that he/she can hit the ball successfully 8 out of 10 times. As the child demonstrates high rates of success and confidence, then gradually increase distance the ball is pitched from, the speed with which it is pitched and the distance it must be hit.

Hitting a Self-Tossed Ball with a Bat
*Equipment Needed: Bats and Foam Balls*
The child holds the bat in his/her dominant hand with the bat over his/her shoulder, leaving room on the grip to place the non-dominant hand below the other hand on the bat. Standing in a side-facing position the child then tosses the ball softly upward with the non-dominant hand, grasps the bat with the other hand and swings at the ball as it drops into the strike zone. The child should make solid contact 8 out of 10 times.

Station #4 – Running/Agility
Run Then Leap
*Equipment Needed: Masking Tape or Cones*
Mark 2 lines, 15 feet apart. Have the child run for a few steps and then leap. Alternate the take-off foot as the child improves.

Combine Running with Other Baseball Skills
*Equipment Needed: Foam Balls or Koosh Balls (optional)*
Have the child begin running, and on the staff member/volunteer’s call the child will change to skipping, sliding, walking, or the grapevine. A staff member should mix these calls. To increase the difficulty, have the child receive a ball while doing the above activities.
Skill Development Exercises - Week 6

**Station #1 - Throwing**

*Throwing to a Designated Base from Various Field Positions*

*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls*

Position the child in the outfield of your mock tee ball field and have the child throw the Koosh Ball to a staff member/volunteer who is positioned at one of the bases. After throwing to one base, the staff member/volunteer should switch to another base until the child has thrown to each base successfully. The staff member/volunteer should ask each time, “Which base am I at now?” and “What position are you playing now?” As the staff member/volunteer changes bases, the child should move to different positions. The goal here is to familiarize the child with the different positions of the field and get them comfortable throwing to different bases.

**Station #2 - Catching**

*Moving Forward and Backward to Catch Fly Balls*

*Equipment Needed: Koosh Balls, Foam Balls and Gloves*

The child moves forward a step or two to catch a fly Koosh Ball or Foam Ball that was thrown short of the child by a staff member/volunteer who is standing 15 feet away. The child should succeed 8 out of 10 times moving forward and backward. The staff member/volunteer should then mix up the throws short of the child and over the child’s head. As the child achieves success, increase the distance and arc of the ball and add the glove.

**Station #3 - Batting**

*Hitting a Small Ball Tossed From the Side to a Designated Area*

*Equipment Needed: Bat, Koosh Balls*

Have a staff member/volunteer stand to the side of the child (5 feet away) and softly toss the Koosh Ball so that the child can strike the ball to a marked area (20 feet away). The child should be able to complete 8 out of 10 times. As the child becomes successful, have him/her hit the ball to the areas from a farther distance.

**Station #4 – Running/Agility**

*Run Bases*

*Equipment Needed: None*

The child will practice running from home plate to first base, first to second base, second to third base, and third base to home plate. They will learn about the order of the bases and how to run for both speed and for quick starting and stopping ability. A staff member will tell the child to which base he/she should run, or whether to run all the way around to home plate for speed. As the child gains confidence, have them practice running 2-3 bases at a time. It is important to stress that they should never jump for any base, and they can run through first unless they are continuing on to second base.
APPENDIX

Performance Cues Posters.......................... A1
Sample Floor Plan..................................... A2
Sample Promotional Flier............................ A3
Sample Press Release................................ A4
Coordinator Survey.................................. A5
Participant Roster.................................... A6
Performance Cues are designed to teach children basic sports mechanics for each skill area. Have staff members/volunteers use them to encourage the children and praise them when they remember individual steps involved with the particular skill. Make posters to be displayed at each skill station for easy reference during your Start Smart Baseball program.

**Throwing**

*Overhand*
- Stand sideways to the target
- Throwing hand and arm way back
- Big step forward with opposite foot
- Belly button to target as you throw
- Shoulder first, then elbow, forearm and hand forward
- Throw as hard as you can

*Underhand*
- Face target
- Throwing hand and arm way back
- Swing arm and ball down and forward
- Shift weight from back to front
- Release ball in front of body

**Catching**

- Move in front of ball
- Bend knees
- Reach up for high balls
- Reach out for low or rolling balls
- Watch ball to your hands
- Step toward the ball to catch
- Squeeze ball with both hands
- “Give” with the ball and bring to body

**Batting**

- Stand with non-dominant side facing the hitting area
- Stand facing the tee or base
- Throwing hand on top of grip
- Bat back away from ball
- Keep eyes on the ball
- Step towards hitting area and swing level
- Transfer weight from back to front foot
- Follow through

**Running**

- Keep your head up
- “Lean into” run slightly
- Lift your knees
- Bend your elbows and swing your arms freely
- Run on the balls of your feet
- Run lightly

**Jumping**

- Crouch halfway down, arms down and behind slightly
- “Explode” upward
- Swing arms forcefully up, then stretch and reach upward
Sample Floor Plan

The following is a sample of a floor plan for the Start Smart Baseball program. Please keep in mind that if you do not have enough space for four stations you can alter this floor plan. Refer to the Program Format section of this manual for details.
Is Your Child Ready For Baseball (Softball or Tee Ball)?

The National Alliance For Youth Sports and ___Your Organization___ present the Start Smart Baseball program.

What: Start Smart is a six-week instructional program that helps children learn the basics of baseball (softball or tee ball): throwing, catching, batting, and running/agility. The program helps prepare children for organized baseball (softball or tee ball) by using safe and fun equipment to teach them the basic motor skills.

Who: Start Smart Baseball is open to children (3-7 years old) who can attend each session to prepare for organized baseball (softball or tee ball).

Where: Start Smart Baseball will be held at the ___site___ for six consecutive ____Day(s) of the week__.

Cost: Each participant will be charged ____fee____ which includes any additional materials provided_____.

*To register please call ____sports and fitness director___ at phone number___ or stop by the___address___ and sign up before ____deadline__!
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: START SMART Baseball Instructor

Parents in [city/town] have a special opportunity to help their children develop sports skills through a unique national program that’s available.

The Start Smart Baseball Program is open to youngsters ages three to seven whose parent or another adult is able to attend the six, one-hour sessions with them.

There are [number] spots available for participants that will be filled on a first come, first serve basis.

The Start Smart program will begin [start date] at the [facility] and will be held from [time] every [day(s)] of the week [day(s)] for [number of weeks] weeks.

“We are excited about being chosen to be a part of this national program,” said [Smart Start Baseball Instructor]. “We are always looking for innovative ways to help improve youth sports and this program certainly helps.”

The Start Smart Baseball program targets children who need to develop basic motor skills such as throwing, catching, kicking and batting that are needed to participate in organized baseball (softball or tee ball).

It will teach children how to develop those skills while building their confidence which will enable them to enjoy participation in all youth sports programs.

A variety of innovative products will be utilized to enhance the child’s skill development.

The program is being administered by the Youth Development branch of the nonprofit National Alliance for Youth Sports based in West Palm Beach, Florida.

For more information, contact [Smart Start Baseball Instructor] at [phone #].

*This is only to be used with the traditional Parent/Child Start Smart Program*
Instructor Survey

Please complete the following survey at the conclusion of your Start Smart program and mail or fax to: Start Smart, 2050 Vista Parkway, West Palm Beach, FL 33411 (561) 712-9887. This is only used for the traditional parent/child Start Smart Program.

Instructor: ___________________________ Organization: _______________________________

Date Program ended: ____________________ Number of Participants: ________________

How much did you charge each participant for the program? __________ Do you feel this price was well-received by the community?

Do you have any concerns regarding the time frame of the program (six one hour sessions)?

Do you feel the program is appropriate for children 3-7 years old?

Do you feel the children showed improvement from the beginning of the program? In what area(s)?

Were the Skill Guides clear for both the instructor and the participants?

Did the Instructor’s Manual contain everything you needed to run your Start Smart Baseball program? What could be added/changed, if anything?

Will you be hosting another Start Smart Baseball program in the future? If so, when?

Did your participants express an interest in a follow up program?

What was the overall perception from the participants in your program?

Do you feel the program helped prepare your participants for future participation in organized baseball (softball or tee ball)?

Please list additional comments you have to enhance our program on the back of this sheet.
Participant Roster

Site: ______________________________
Instructor: ______________________________
Address: ______________________________
Phone: ______________________________

Make copies of this page if you have more participants than the space provided

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