



Safety Policy

THE "SAFETY FIRST, FUN ALWAYS" PLAYER & PARENT POLICY: COACHES GUIDE

The Core Philosophy

Our recreational league is open to every child, regardless of skill level. We measure success by smiles, development, and fun. However, **emotional and physical safety is the prerequisite for fun**. While we expect normal childhood high spirits, behaviors that create an immediate physical risk to teammates, coaches, or spectators require structured intervention.

Clear Safety Boundaries (What All Players Must Know)

Coaches will teach and reinforce these basic safety rules from Day 1:

1. **Bat Rule:** Bats only touch hands when a player is actively stepping up to the plate. No swinging in the dugout, behind the dugout, or near teammates.
2. **The Listening Rule:** When a coach blows a whistle or calls for attention, all movement stops, equipment drops, and eyes look at the coach.
3. **The Respect Rule:** No intentional throwing of equipment in anger, and no physical contact (pushing, hitting) with teammates or opponents.

The Progressive Safety Protocol

This phased action plan gives volunteer coaches a step-by-step ladder to follow. It ensures the league supports the coach, involves the parents early as partners, and keeps the Parks and Recreation department in control of any final league status decisions.

1.Phase 1: The 'Safety Reset' (In-the-Moment): Handled by the Coach.

If a player violates a core safety boundary (like swinging a bat dangerously), the coach provides an immediate, calm directive to stop.

If the behavior happens again in the same practice or game, the coach executes a **Safety Reset**: The player is asked to sit on the bench next to the coach for 5–10 minutes. The coach explains calmly: *"You are sitting here because swinging the bat like that can hurt someone. I need to keep everyone safe. When the timer is up, you can try again."*

2.Phase 2: The Parent Connection: Handled by the Coach & Director.

If a player requires more than one Safety Reset in a single session, or if they refuse to comply with the reset, the volunteer coach handles the rest of the practice/game as safely as possible and notifies the Parks and Recreation Director that evening.

The Director or Coach reaches out to the parent before the next scheduled session. The tone is collaborative, not punitive: *"We love having your child in the league, but we had a couple of instances where they couldn't follow safety commands with the equipment. With only two coaches on the field, we need your help ensuring they understand that listening to safety commands is a requirement to play."*

3.Phase 3: The Structured Participation Plan: Handled by the Director, Parent, & Coach.

If the dangerous behavior continues into the next week, the Community Enrichment Director steps in to create a temporary **Structured Participation Plan**.

This plan sets a conditional boundary for the child to remain on the field. The most effective approach for recreational leagues with limited volunteer staff is requiring a **Parent Shadow**. The parent or a designated adult family member must sit directly in the dugout or stand on the sideline to manage their child's behavior individually, allowing the volunteer coaches to focus on the whole team.

4.Phase 4: Alternative Participation or League Pause: Handled Exclusively by the Director.

If the family is unwilling to participate in a structure plan, or if the child continues to create immediate physical dangers despite a parent being present, the Director may issue a temporary pause (suspension for 1–2 games) or transition the child out of the league for the remainder of the season.

Note: A volunteer coach *never* has the authority to kick a child out of the league or bench them for an entire game without Director approval. This protects the volunteer from parent backlash.

Traffic Light Safety Policy

This policy is in effect during all practices and games. Categorizing behaviors by "traffic lights" and adjusting the protocol by age group makes this policy incredibly practical for volunteer coaches. A four-year-old doesn't have the same impulse control as a twelve-year-old, and a coach needs to know exactly when to ignore standard "kid chaos" versus when to step in for a safety emergency.

Here is the expanded, comprehensive policy framework structured for both practices and games, including the traffic light guide, age-based adjustments, and the coach report.

The Traffic Light Behavior Guide

This guide helps coaches distinguish between normal recreational play, behavioral issues, and absolute safety red lines.

Light Color	Behavior Type	Examples	Coach Action
GREEN LIGHT	Normal Youth Energy & Learning	Striking out, missing a ball, distracted by a dandelion, forgetting a rule, general silliness.	Standard Coaching: Encourage, redirect, keep the energy positive. No discipline needed.
YELLOW LIGHT	Unsportsmanlike / Disruptive	Throwing a glove in frustration, using bad language, teasing a	Sportsmanship Reset: Address the behavior, remind them of league values, or use a brief

		teammate, arguing with an umpire, ignoring game flow.	bench timeout. Notify parents at pickup.
RED LIGHT	Immediate Physical Safety Risk	Swinging a bat outside the designated hitting area, throwing equipment <i>at</i> someone, physical aggression, refusing to follow a coach's direct safety instruction (e.g., running onto the field while live hitting is happening).	Immediate Safety Protocol: Execute the age-appropriate Safety Reset immediately. Triggers league notification.

Age-Appropriate Safety Resets (Practices & Games)

Group A: The "Little League Tots" (Ages 4–6) At this age, long bench timeouts lead to more acting out. The goal is immediate distraction separation.

- **Practice/Game Action:** If a child exhibits a **Red Light** behavior, the coach brings the child to the sideline for a 1-minute "High-Five Break." The coach says: *"We have to keep our bodies safe so no one gets hurt. Let's take a deep breath and try again."*
- **The Parent Hand-Off:** If the behavior happens a second time in the same practice or game, the coach gently hands the child off directly to their parent on the sideline. The coach says: *"Can you hang out with Mom/Dad for five minutes until we are ready to use safe hands?"*

Group B: The Youth Divisions (Ages 7–13) Older children understand rules and consequences but often push boundaries with peer groups.

- **Practice/Game Action:** If a child exhibits a **Red Light** behavior, they are placed on the bench for a formal **5-to-10-minute Safety Reset**.
- **The Safety Check-In:** Before returning to the field or dugout, the coach must have a 30-second check-in with the player: *"Do you understand why you had to sit down? What is the rule for the bat? Great, let's go back out there and have fun safely."*

The 60-Second Coach Incident Report

Coaches can copy, paste, and text/email this quick 3-sentence summary to the Recreation Director from their phone right after a practice or game.

Player Name & Team: [Name / Team Color or Division]

Date of Incident: [Date]

1. **What happened? (The Behavior):**
2. **What action was taken? (The Reset):**
3. **Were the parents notified at the field?** [Yes / No]