



Bambino Buddy-Ball

Youth always had a special place reserved in “The Babe’s” heart. Youth Sports are for every child regardless of physical or mental ability.





Bambino Buddy Ball >>

Imagine...some kids not being able to get out on the field, feel the sun beating down as he or she squints to see the ball flying towards them, and catch the ball. Imagine...some kids not being able to hold a bat, hit a ball, or run the bases.



Bambino Buddy-Ball History

- ▶ Bambino Buddy-Ball was founded in 2000 as a division of Babe Ruth League, Inc., for organizations who wish to charter a league that encompasses players who are either physically and/or mentally challenged and who yearn to play the game of baseball or softball.
- ▶ Since its inception, Bambino Buddy-Ball has experienced tremendous growth throughout the country.



Why Bambino Buddy-Ball

- ▶ Babe Ruth League, Inc. believes that every child has the right to participate in the games of baseball and softball.
- ▶ The Bambino Buddy-Ball Division allows our challenged or special needs athletes to enjoy the game on the same level that is experienced by other participants.
- ▶ Advancing the personal development of any child through team participation and kinship is an important step along the road to success and happiness.



Why Bambino Buddy-Ball

- ▶ Bambino Buddy-Ball opens up a whole new world to our challenged kids – not only do they experience the thrill of participating, they also get to experience team play and camaraderie.
- ▶ Buddy-Ball participants develop confidence and positive self-esteem.
- ▶ Participation assists with physical fitness, and their social skills.
- ▶ The joy and emotion experienced when a challenged child puts on that first uniform or wears that first cap is like no other.



About Bambino Buddy-Ball

- ▶ Bambino Buddy-Ball is for boys, girls and young adults, aged 5–20 (and sometimes older), with mental and/or physical disabilities that have the desire to play organized, non-competitive baseball or softball.
- ▶ This division makes allowance for a “Buddy” to help the players swing a bat, round the bases, catch a ball, and enjoy all other aspects of the game.



About Bambino Buddy-Ball

- ▶ There are no restrictions to the age of the buddy.
- ▶ An emotionally rewarding experience for all involved as Buddy-Ball allows the buddies to feel good about helping their challenged friends, while at the same time making it a fun and memorable time for all.





Organization >>

The heart of Babe Ruth League, Inc. is the local league. BRL Rules and Regulations provide a framework under which local leagues operate with simplicity and democracy. Each local league administers its own program within this framework of rules and regulations and are given much autonomy, a fact that sets Babe Ruth League, Inc. far apart from all other programs.



Administering the Buddy-Ball Program

- ▶ Electing a Board Member to oversee the Buddy-Ball Division is an important task for a successful program.
- ▶ This individual would act as a liaison between the League Board and those involved in the Buddy-Ball program.



Administering the Buddy-Ball Program

- ▶ Suggested responsibilities for Buddy-Ball Liaison:
 - Ensure fields are scheduled for games.
 - Recommend managers and coaches for Buddy-Ball teams to the Board for approval.
 - Work with Cal Ripken/Babe Ruth teams to recruit buddies for games.
 - Provide an update on Buddy-Ball activities at each Board Meeting for the local league.
 - Promote the Buddy-Ball program within the community.



Administering the Buddy-Ball Program

- ▶ The careful selection of managers and coaches is key to having a successful Buddy-Ball program. Managers and coaches must reflect positive reinforcement with patience and understanding.
- ▶ Managers and coaches should not be overly competitive.
- ▶ Teams should be based on a combination of ability and size.



Administering the Buddy-Ball Program

- ▶ In most cases, the parents of the players involved with the program will volunteer to serve as managers and coaches, although anyone approved by the local League Board may manage or coach.
- ▶ A league may check with their local special education department to recruit managers and coaches.
- ▶ It is recommended that each Buddy-Ball team have one (1) manager and two (2) coaches.
- ▶ Managers and coaches should enlist the assistance of buddies to assist players on and off the field.



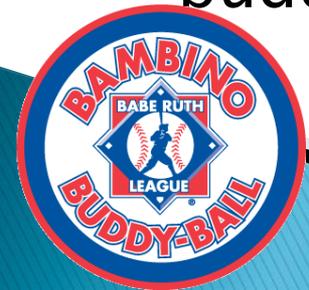
Recruiting Buddies

- ▶ Players are typically assigned a buddy. Not all players will require buddies to assist them during the game, but many will. A team may elect to have a buddy for every player or have a designated buddy to assist multiple players.
- ▶ To determine the number of buddies your league will need, players, or their guardian(s) should indicate at the time of registration whether they will or will not need a buddy.
- ▶ Sources of buddies:
 - Family members
 - Local Cal Ripken Baseball, Babe Ruth Baseball and Babe Ruth Softball leagues
 - Local High School students – many schools ask students to complete community service hours
 - Other youth organizations



Buddy Responsibilities

- ▶ Assist Buddy-Ball players in any way necessary during game play.
- ▶ When possible, each player should use the same buddy for the duration of the season. However, a Buddy may volunteer to assist a player for the entire season, or for just one game.
- ▶ If possible, it is best to have Cal Ripken Baseball, Babe Ruth Baseball or Babe Ruth Softball players serve as buddies. This allows Buddy-Ball participants to build friendships with individuals similar in age, as well as provides participants and buddies alike to experience a special camaraderie.



Buddy Responsibilities

- ▶ Buddies are on hand to assist players with batting, base running and fielding.
- ▶ Buddies should only assist players when necessary, not play the game for them.



Buddy Responsibilities – Batting

▶ Batting

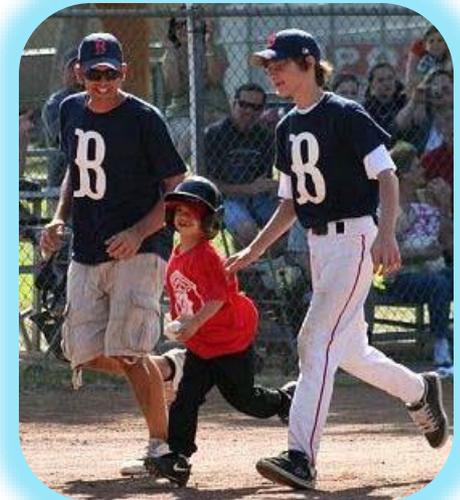
- Help your player select a bat and helmet and get them into the batting position.
- Thrown pitch – help your player swing the bat, if needed.
- Batting Tee – if a player is not successful at hitting a thrown pitch, encourage them to use a batting tee. Set the ball in place on the tee when the fielders are ready and get the player into the batting position. Assist the player in swinging at the tee if needed.
- Make sure the player drops the bat before base running.



Buddy Responsibilities – Base Running

▶ Base Running

- In most cases, runners will advance one base at a time.
- Some players need guidance on where to run after they hit the ball. In this case, point your player in the right direction after they hit the ball.
- Run with your player, stay close enough to protect him or her from a thrown or batted ball, but allow the player to lead.
- At the end of an inning, all buddies and players should remain on the field until the last base runner scores.



Buddy Responsibilities – Fielding

▶ Fielding



- Help your player find his/her position in the field. Make sure fielders are a safe distance from the batter. No fielder should be located in front of the pitcher's mound.
- Avoid standing in the base paths.
- Stand near your player in a position that will allow you to protect him or her from a batted or thrown ball.
- Allow players to field the ball when possible. When your player is ready to throw a ball, make sure the player receiving the ball is ready to take delivery of the throw.
- If necessary, assist in fielding the ball, but always allow the player to make the throw.



Buddy Responsibilities – Fielding

▶ Fielding

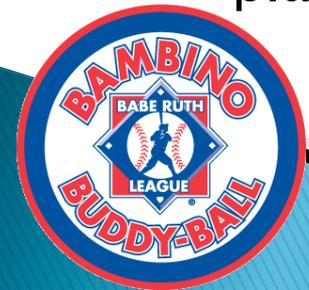
- Players with **unlimited mobility** on a softly-hit ball: Allow the player to field the ball alone. Direct the player where to throw the ball.
- Players with **unlimited mobility** on a hard hit ball: If the ball is heading to the outfield, let it go. If the ball is hit in the infield, the Buddy should knock it down (if necessary), and then allow the player to field the ball.
- Players with **limited mobility** (walker, wheelchair, etc.): Field the ball or ask another buddy to field the ball, and hand it to your player to hold momentarily or throw. Assist the player in throwing the ball, if necessary. When talking to or instructing a player using a wheelchair, position yourself at their eye level and talk face-to-face.



Buddy Responsibilities – After the Game

▶ After the Game

- Assist Coaches with lining the players up to shake hands.
- Remind players to shake hands gently.
- Stay with your player until a family member, or an individual with pre-arranged authorization from the player's parent or legal guardian, picks them up after the game. Never leave a player unattended.



Buddy Training

- ▶ It is beneficial to the league and the participants to conduct a one-day Buddy Training session prior to the start of the season.
- ▶ The training can be administered by the Buddy-Ball Liaison, by an individual selected by the Buddy-Ball Liaison, by a special-education professional or another youth community organization leader.



Buddy Training

- ▶ Training Session should include:
 - An introduction to Bambino Buddy-Ball to familiarize buddies with the concept of adaptive baseball/softball.
 - Guidelines on dealing with players with physical and/or mental disabilities.
 - Review the season's game schedule and all other league activities.
 - Review player profiles, and assign buddies to respective players.
 - Have a Question and Answer period.



Player Recruitment

- ▶ Set up meetings with the Special Education Department of your local school district and other community service organizations to explain the basics of Bambino Buddy-Ball, an adaptive alternative to youth baseball and softball.
- ▶ Detail that the program gives every player the opportunity to participate, regardless of level of athletic ability.
- ▶ Ask for their support in disseminating information to students, children, parents and members of the community.
- ▶ Post News Releases – Social Media, TV, Radio, Newspaper





Suggested Operations and Rules Guide >>

The following is a guide intended to provide recommendations on the various aspects of operating a Buddy-Ball Program, as well as suggested rule adaptations.

Suggested Rules Guide

- ▶ Games are non-competitive and should be played a **maximum** of 4 innings and a time limit of 1 ½ hours, whichever comes first. Teams typically play 1 game per week.
- ▶ Should not keep score, nor conduct league standings.
- ▶ No stealing, leading off bases, sliding, infield fly rule or bunting permitted. Runners can leave the base once the ball is hit.
- ▶ A player's safety and welfare is paramount during every game. At no time should a player's safety be compromised to advance a base, score a run, or accomplish any other play.



Suggested Rules Guide

- ▶ Batting – Depending on the skills of the batter, they can use the batting tee or have the coach or buddy pitch. Pitching underhand or overhand is determined by the batting skills and eyesight of the player. A batter should get an average of 6 pitches or tee-aided attempts to hit the ball. Balls and strikes should not be called, but an umpire can keep track of pitches or swings. If a player misses all 6 attempts, have them proceed and run to first base. This step encourages the player to continue the activity and develop their base running skills and not dwell on their inability to hit the ball.
- ▶ A continuous batting order is suggested, and all players should bat in order, whether they are playing offense or defense. An inning is completed once all players have batted. The last batter in the inning should run all bases and score.



Suggested Rules Guide

- ▶ The on deck batter and buddy should station themselves in the On-Deck area while awaiting their turn at bat.
- ▶ Outs should not be counted to determine when an inning is completed.
- ▶ During the at-bat sequence, the buddy can assist their player in swinging the bat. If not, the buddy should be stationed approximately 8 feet behind and parallel to the batter in preparation to assist the batter toward first base, once the ball is hit.



Suggested Rules Guide

- ▶ The buddy should run outside the foul line while the runner is running inside the foul line toward first base. This will allow the buddy to assist the runner if he/she falls while running to base. Buddies follow the same idea while running to the other bases as well. If a batter is not going to require his buddy's assistance while running, the buddy can station themselves in the appropriate coaching box or encourage their player from the dugout area.



Suggested Rules Guide

- ▶ Playing Offense (Interactive participation of player and his/her buddy) – All players are required to wear a Batting Helmet when batting or running the bases. Buddies should have the option to assist their players when batting or running the bases. If players require physician prescribed headgear while playing, they will be required to wear it at all times.
- ▶ When a runner is on first base, the buddy should stand in the 1st base coaching box, ready to assist their player towards second base. When on second base, the buddy should stand immediately behind the runner to help them advance to 3rd. When on 3rd, the buddy should stand in the 3rd base coaching box, ready to assist the runner toward home plate to score a run.



Suggested Rules Guide

- ▶ Playing Defense (Interactive participation of player and his/her buddy) – All players that are on defense and on the field should have their buddies assisting them.
- ▶ Players should be stationed in positional play with the exception of the pitcher. All buddies should station themselves in earshot or immediately behind their positioned player. While assisting the catcher, stand 2 feet to the catcher's side to be ready to assist and get the ball back to the coach/buddy that is pitching.
- ▶ Use common sense in determining where you stand, especially depending on the batter's hitting ability.



Suggested Rules Guide

- ▶ Sportsmanship – All players, buddies and coaches should conduct themselves in a very responsible and respectful manner towards each other and demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times.
- ▶ At the end of each game, teams should line up, shake hands, and congratulate each other on a good game.





Bambino Buddy-Ball Fields >>

Suggested Field Adaptations

Suggested Field Adaptations

- ▶ Widen Entrances to Dugouts
- ▶ Areas for Wheelchairs
- ▶ Protective Fencing
- ▶ Handicap Accessible Drinking Fountains, Restrooms and Concessions
- ▶ Ample Handicap Parking or dedicated parking for players during practice and on game days
- ▶ The Playing Field
 - Buddy-Ball games may be played on traditional baseball or softball fields. However, there are options that may improve game play, such as a rubberized or synthetic playing surface





Bambino Buddy-Ball >>

How to Charter a Buddy-Ball League. Costs. Questions.

Chartering a Buddy-Ball League

- ▶ A Bambino Buddy-Ball Division can be added to the charter of an existing league or can be chartered on its own.
- ▶ Affiliation with Babe Ruth League provides the league with essential support to help make the participants' experience positive and rewarding.
- ▶ Leagues are provided with complimentary educational materials, rulebooks, league supplies and other administrative/training resources.



Costs

- ▶ The costs to operate a Bambino Buddy-Ball League are similar to those involved with operating any other baseball/softball league.
- ▶ Premier comprehensive general liability, group accident and directors & officers insurance plans that are second to none are available at extremely attractive rates.



Questions

- ▶ Service Representatives are available to assist leagues with charters, promotional materials, insurance enrollment, special requests and all questions. They can be contacted toll-free at 1-800-880-3142.
- ▶ Leagues may also contact BRL Vice President/Commissioner Robert Faherty or Commissioner Rob Connor by using the same toll-free number.
- ▶ Visit www.baberuthleague.org



Bambino Buddy-Ball



Bambino Buddy-Ball definitely tugs at the heartstrings.

Something very special happens at each and every game. Ball fields become populated by big smiles...smiles on the faces of special participants who have an entire new world opening up right in front of them.



Make sure that *all* kids in your community have the opportunity to enjoy the thrills of the game, experience memorable moments, and build friendships.

Start a Buddy-Ball program today!