

Bats and Balls

Introduction

There are many games that use bats and balls. In the United States, playing ball usually means playing baseball. That's because baseball was first played in the United States. Two other games, T-ball and softball, are very much like baseball. All three games are usually played in summer or early fall. That's because they all need a big, flat, and open space for hitting balls and running around bases. Baseball is a team game, if you have a friend, a bat, and a ball, you can learn to pitch, hit, and catch the ball even in your yard or a small park.

T-Ball

Just like baseball, T-ball has two teams of players. Each team has a turn where their players get to hit the ball with a bat. While one team hits the ball, the other team is in the field. Their job is to stop hitters from scoring runs. Once a ball is hit from the tee, the game of T-ball is like baseball. The hitter tries to run to first base. The team in the field tries to catch the ball and stop the hitter from scoring a run. T-ball helps children learn the skills of hitting, running, fielding and throwing. These are the very skills that will help them play baseball when they are older.

Baseball

Baseball can be exciting to play or watch. A minute of exciting action can be followed by long periods of little action. For the team at bat, only the batter and batters who have gotten on base are on the field. The rest of the team waits for their turn to bat. For the team in the field, most of the action is between the pitcher and the catcher. But the other players in the field need to pay attention. Once a ball is hit, they have to act quickly. Each team has nine turns to bat. Each set of turns is called an inning. If the score is tied at the end of nine innings, the teams play another inning. A baseball game can go on for a very long time!

Softball

Many rules of softball are the same as those of baseball. But one big difference is the pitching. In baseball, the pitcher can throw overhand. The pitcher throws from a mound that is higher than the rest of the field. In softball, the pitcher can only throw underhand and there is no mound. In America, about 40 million people play softball each summer. It's never too early to start playing ball. Big bats and balls made of soft materials are easy to find. These make learning to hit, catch, and throw safe for children. You don't need a whole team to learn the skills of baseball, softball, or T-ball. You and a friend can learn to throw, catch, and hit the ball together.

The Power of Teamwork

When you join a baseball team, it's all about being involved, participating, and joining forces with a group of people who are all on the same side as you. When you compete against other teams, you must work together to achieve the goals that you all share. Being on a youth baseball team, therefore, is a trust-building exercise for kids, because they must learn to believe in each other, and must work together to put everyone's skills and strengths to good use.

Will You Celebrate Thanksgiving?

- What else would you eat on Thanksgiving?
- What other countries celebrate Thanksgiving, too?

Vocabulary

- **tradition** – the handing down of beliefs, legends, customs, information, etc., from generation to generation
- **blessings** – the act or words of one that blesses
- **Pilgrims** – one of the English colonists settling at Plymouth in 1620
- **describe** – give a detailed account in words of