

## Strike Zone Club Teams Policies and Expectations

Welcome to Strike Zone! We are so excited for the upcoming year in baseball. We have set forth some levels of expectations and some general policies that we feel will best represent Strike Zone. We hope to change the face of youth baseball for the better, and that all starts with you! Thank you so much for taking the challenge!

### **4 coaches Maximum**

One coach outfield

One coach infield

One coach calling pitches

One extra bench coach

### **12 players max**

- We do not hold grudges if a player wants to go to a different team, even another team in the Strike Zone organization. There are many situations where a player would like to try out for a higher level team within the Strike Zone organization and we need to make that opportunity available to them. Although we would like to keep all of our top performers, we have to keep in mind that the most important thing is what is best for each individual player. Sometime players also want to move because of other reasons and we need to allow that without grudges but wish them the best of luck.
- We are willing to talk with parents without our egos getting involved or feelings being hurt. We have a 24 hr. rule for parents to voice concerns and coaches should follow a 24 hour rule when responding back to parents. This will allow us to calmly get our thoughts together and not respond back with frustration. For coaches, if 24 hrs. Has gone by and we are still frustrated contact me so we can talk through the situation. We are dealing with peoples' children and we need to understand that they will be concerned and have questions about certain things. Parents also need to understand that coaches are human and they are trying to make the best decisions for ALL the players on the team not just too only focusing on your son but they have to focus on the entire team.
- We will have a no tolerance policy for issues concerning parents that are complaining in the stands and stirring up trouble with other families. You will be asked to leave the team during the season. If you have a concern or problem please contact the coach. It will go much better than if you are just complaining in the stands
- **Conflict chain of communication:** conflict arises. Parent waits 24hrs and communicates with coach; coach waits 24hrs and communicates with parents. (Do not voice frustrations on Facebook or any social media you can be removed from the Strike Zone program immediately). If the conflict is not resolved the coach will voice the conflict with me. We will set a meeting to resolve conflict between coach and parent.
- Every player will play in **every** game, but it may not be equal playing time. It may only be one inning. League play and pool play games will be used to give players opportunity to play their position or give the coaches opportunity to try players at new positions. If the team is not playing league, it is mandatory they use pool play to move players to positions that they would not play on Sunday. When it is a must win game (tournament bracket play or tournaments where you have to be in the top to be able to advance to bracket), we will play to win. It is not fair for the entire team to lose and not have a chance for the championship just to get everyone equal playing time. We will use games that it is not mandatory to win to advance for that.

We need to identify an infield position for every player. Some players will be able to play multiple infield positions. In our development games (league and scrimmages and pool play games) we will help secondary players get their learning and experience in. This helps the team be much stronger overall as the season goes on. You have players who can play multiple positions without much drop off in result. It may

be ugly at the beginning of the year but the team and players will be much stronger for the early season growth.

- 14U and older can bat 9 or 10 with subs in all bracket games and tournaments that you have to be in the top to be able to advance. All other situations we bat lineup in pool play.
- 12U & 13U AAA and Major can bat 9 or 10 with subs in bracket and pool play where you have to win to advance. All other situations we bat lineup
- 7U-11U we bat lineup in all games.
- 12U A/AA we bat lineup in all games
- 13U A/AA will bat lineup with all games
- If a player is not improving on something that the coach has worked with them on, the coaches can ask that they get lessons outside of practice to help them get through some mechanical change they may need to make.
- Players are expected to get extra work in on their own. We will spend time at practice working with them and teaching them what they need to work on, but they have to put in the effort outside of practice to master it. During the season, every player should take an extra 100-200 swings a week outside of what we do at practice and if they would like to pitch, they should throw 2 bullpens a week and go through their motion 20-30 times a day on days when they do not pitch. Baseball is a game of repetitions and without putting in the work, there is no way to master it
- 9&10U expectations.: players should work 1-2 days on their own outside of team practices
- 11&12U expectations: players should work 2-3 days on their own outside of team practice
- 13&14U expectations: players should work 3-4 days on their own outside of team practice

If you are not willing to put in the work there is no way you can excel at baseball. It takes a commitment from the player and the parents. If you are not knowledgeable as to what needs to be worked on, you can get private lessons to fill in the work outside of practices

- We do not put wins above doing what is right. We are trying to raise young men and we don't want them thinking you need to do whatever is necessary to win even if it is grey area of what is right. Always be honest and don't cheat the system. **They may lose a game today, but they will win in life due to learning the right principles.**
- We do not delay the game to make the game run out of time. Either by: walking out to the mound or switching pitchers to run the clock out. If we cannot beat a team playing them, then we do not deserve the win. It is better for the boys to understand that they need to get better, than to hide the fact that we were going to lose. The rule is designed to keep the games going and to be able to get games in with limited time. Not to take advantage of.
- We will not turn the scoreboard off on our teams. If we are getting beat we need to know it. In life you cannot turn the scoreboard off. You have to address the fact that you have been beaten and get better. It is a great opportunity to teach the boys a valuable lesson on addressing the fact and choosing to learn and get better. Other teams can hide the fact that they are losing. We are building tough young men and they can handle it or we will help them learn how to handle it.

- The coaches will attend coaches' training meetings in the fall. There will be very structured practices throughout the winter and need to have coaches helping in stations and need everyone to be on the same page with each other and the players.
- Coaches and assistant coaches need to run stations in practices. If you need to talk with each other or with parents do it before or after practice. We need to utilize the practice time to the best of our ability and work with the players the entire time
- Rules on guest players: **No guest players unless you have less than 10 of your own.** (Exception: big events where extra pitching would be needed. Most teams are built for the average tournament where you have 2 pool play games and 3 bracket play games. Any tournament that would exceed 5 games to win the championship a guest player can be brought in to help with the extra pitching that would be required. All guest players must fit within the USSSA rules and requirements for being on the roster).
- The guest player will bat last (we have teams that practice together all off season and through the summer.) We cannot bring players in (who may be better) and let them take positions of kids who have been working all year. The guest player will not start in the field over a full-time player but can be rotated in as you would a regular player. The guest player can start a game as a pitcher if needed. We do not want our players to bail on us in the middle of the season and we will not bail on them. If players are not living up to expectations on performance, we need to do something to help them get better or tell them what they need to do at home to get better. We may make an adjustment in the off season if they do not do what we ask them to.
- We need to welcome failure. If someone never fails it means they are never stretching their limits. This means they can not grow. Parents and coaches need to understand that failing through stretching should be encouraged. However, failing through fear or lack of effort should be addressed in a teaching format. Yelling at the kids, coaches, or umpires doesn't help anyone get better.
- Strike Zone players can be benched at any time for a poor attitude or crying because they messed up. **A poor attitude is never acceptable.** We have to help the kids understand that failing is going to happen. It is how you handle it and bounce back that is important. It is ok for a player to be frustrated or upset because they have messed up but how they learn to channel the frustration is important. They need to use it for the positive and to create more focus on what they are doing
- Players understand August 1 –April 1 is all other sports' season; Soccer, football, basketball, wrestling, etc. If there is a conflict you should attend the in-season sport. April 1- July 29 is baseball season. Your team is counting on you! If you miss a Strike Zone team game for another sport in the months of April - July you may sit an entire game as you have not prioritized your commitment to your team.
- You do not miss practice because you are tired or don't feel like it. To be successful at anything you need to do things you don't want to do and I want to teach the players that how they feel in the moment doesn't take over what they committed to and how to be successful.
- If a player misses a practice or game he cannot start the next game. (Unless he missed a game in a tournament that was added in after the full season schedule was posted or if there is a last minute extra practice outside of regularly scheduled practice times.)  
 Exceptions:
  - 1) Mandatory school events (choosing to do middle school track or other school sport during your baseball season and then missing practice does not count as a mandatory school event. It was optional to join the team and should be treated like you chose to miss practice)
  - 2) Death in the family
  - 3) Close family member wedding: (if you are not part of the wedding party or your child is not part of it then they should be at the game. You are free to go to the wedding but the kid would rather be playing baseball anyway. Someone on the team will give them a ride)

- If they miss practice they will have to sit a minimum of 2 innings
- If they miss a game they will miss a minimum of 3 innings
- If there are continued multiple offenses then the player could sit an entire game

(We like to keep rosters low so players can maximize playing time, when we make small rosters it takes a commitment from everyone who joins the team to be there. When you schedule something else it hurts the entire team and we need everyone who accepts an offer to a Strike Zone team to understand the commitment)

- In order to get the full benefit of Strike Zone and to improve you need to prioritize making the Strike Zone winter practice sessions. I understand there will be conflicts and if you cannot make all of them you need to get in for lessons and come in and practice on your own
  - **Don't strive for the minimum, strive for 100%**
- Outside of injury or need to use the restroom players need to stay in the dugout. They don't need to go out and visit with or be consoled by their parents/fans. They need to come in the dugout ready to play, drinks and all. Parents should be encouraged to encourage from the stands.
- Parents need to stay outside of dugout and off of the dugout fence during the game. Let the coach's deal with everything for the 1hr and 45 mins to 2 hours of the game. If there is something that seems to be missed, feel free to talk to the coach before the next game so they can deal with it. Players do not need to be distracted from the game; they need to be on the fence cheering for their team, not discussing their individual performance.
- Parents do not coach from the stands. Players do not need to be looking in the stands after every pitch to get instruction.
  - Do not yell at your child for making a mistake on the field. When you do it will not make your player better and it will make the other kids nervous. If you cannot control your frustration how can we teach the kids to control theirs?
  - Let the coaches make the game decisions and coach the kids on what they should have done. The players do not need to hear 2 different things from coaches and parents. It only confuses the player and they cannot play well confused.
  - Do not try to move players in the field. I know some times players are not in the right spot in their position on the field and the coaches miss it, but there are many more times the coaches have a player in a certain spot for a reason that you may not know about from the stands
  - Do not call pitches from the stands
- If you play for another team with friends that is okay, however, the Strike Zone team is the priority team if there is a conflict. I understand wanting to play in a different league with friends as long as it is in the rules (cannot compete in multiple 3&2 teams at the same age), but Strike Zone needs to be what comes first. All of the players on these teams work hard to prepare to win; it is not right to bail on them for a different team. You don't miss a Strike Zone practice because your friends team has a game
- As coaches we need to talk to kids and teach them after bad plays and good plays. It doesn't do much good to yell at them during the inning, unless you are yelling "calm down keep your head in it" or something encouraging and refocusing. The learning time is not in the inning in front of everyone, it is in the dugout when it is calm. Kids know when they mess up. We will gain nothing by embarrassing them in front of everyone. They are only more likely to play tight and make more mistakes. **We need to remember to stay calm as well, even the professionals mess up! Always remember you represent Strike Zone out on the field and we want to represent Strike Zone well.** You want players from other teams looking at you as coaches and wishing their son played for you. It will help you attract better players in the future if you need to run tryouts.
 

Sometimes you are not even yelling at them but there is too much in game instruction going on. That confuses the kids and makes them nervous. During the game there should be more time taking

notes of what needs to be worked on during practice than trying to do all of the instruction during the game.

- All parents and coaches need to be aware of different stadium rules. For example, 3&2 has a no alcohol on the premises policy. Multiple teams have been kicked out of tournaments for parents/fans consuming alcohol in the stands and parking lots. The team is kicked out of the tournament with no refund. Please be aware of such rules and follow them accordingly. Remember you are representing Strike Zone, which means your behavior both on the field and in the stands. **Be respectful to rules and umpires.**
- Don't make plans on a tournament weekend after the schedule has been made. Plan on being a baseball player for the summer. There will be time at the end of the season to take a family vacation, not when your team is counting on you
- Do not yell at umpires. I understand that they are bad and a lot of times don't know the rules. As we yell at umpires we make it so the kids think it is the umpire's fault that things are going wrong. We don't want the kids blaming umpires for everything so we as coaches need to make sure we represent the same thing. If it is a judgment call they are not going to change it. You can ask for an appeal but assume the other umpire probably didn't see it either. We need to let the head coach deal with the umpire, if the coach feels it is important enough, he will talk with the umpire. Outside of that we should just cheer for the players. If they have a rule wrong then there is no need to get in an argument just call for a white hat to get a rule interpretation. Sometimes the White hat will have the rule wrong also. It is better to let it go we do not want to create the reputation that we argue everything because Umpires hold grudges and tell their friends they will intentionally make bad calls against you.
- Players will be evaluated throughout the season on effort, attitude, ability/performance and overall fit with the team to determine if they will be invited back the following season. If a player is not ready to move on with the current team but would like to stay involved in the Strike Zone training program, we will try to place the player on the team that best fits him.
- All payment for the club team fees will be made through automatic monthly withdraws from checking account or credit card. I am not going to try to track down people for their monthly payment. I need to focus on helping the players, not who has and has not paid.
- Overall we take great pride in what we do to help the kids develop as baseball players and as young men. We want to represent ourselves well out on the field as parents and as coaches. I am not a fan of the way a lot of coaches talk to and treat kids as well as the way a lot of parents act in the stands. We want to represent a new way with a new attitude out at the ball park; **Winning through good attitude, good preparation and encouragement. We set a high expectation for players without yelling or demeaning the players to get the best out of them.**
- I am very excited for another year of Strike Zone baseball! I am here to help and encourage both the players and the parents through this growing period of change in youth baseball. If you have any questions or concerns, please come to me. My door is always open, and I am always looking for things that I need to improve on.

**I have read and agree to the policies and expectations for Strike Zone Baseball Club teams.**

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Printed Name

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Signature

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Date