

Preparing for CLLL Skills Evaluations

Objective

The Purpose of this paper is to give you and your child a head-start on the preparation for the upcoming CLLL Skills Evaluations/Tryouts. Parts of this primer have been adapted from an article from Junior Baseball and “Tips For A Successful Tryout” by Bruce Lambin.

Materials To Bring

- Glove(s), if you have a position-specific glove, you can bring it as well.
- Bat if you have one, if not, one will be provided
- Helmet if you have one, if not, one will be provided
- Catcher’s Gear (if you are a catcher)
- No cleats, just sneakers

Do’s For Skills Evaluations

1. Be sure you know when all the try-outs are held, and how many sessions (if more than 1) you are required to attend. If needed, plan to attend as many as possible, so that you become familiar to the coaches. The better they know you, they better your chances. Please do your best to make it to your assigned date and time. We know conflicts come up, but this process is designed to put hundreds of kids through, so please do your best to arrive on time and on the assigned date. Be aware, once you arrive, there is a registration process so arriving a few minutes early wouldn’t hurt.
2. Be sure you practice several days before evaluations, getting your arm loose and your glove loosened up as well. Too many kids haven’t picked up a glove in months and go out to try-outs having not prepared, and they wonder why they can’t throw straight or catch a grounder. You have to get your body loose and ready before the tryout.
3. Be sure to bring all of your gear. Don’t take that brand new glove you may have gotten over the holiday. It’s better to use your old soft one until the new one breaks in. Also bring all of the appropriate gear (helmet, bat, catcher’s gear, etc.). If you do not have a helmet or bat, one will be provided. You want to be prepared for whatever the coaches and evaluators ask of you. For instance, if you are a catcher, make sure you have your catcher’s mitt. But make sure not to only bring that so you can’t field ground ball appropriately.

4. Wear something appropriate and distinctive, like a yellow t-shirt or a red hat. Coaches have an easier time keeping track of players when they stand out. And try to wear the same shirt every time, so they get even more familiar with you. You want them to notice you for the good! We're sure that if you showed up in your jeans, you would get noticed as well. Dress like a ballplayer. Our evaluations take place indoors so please no cleats, just sneakers.
5. Bring your best energy to the try-outs and stay focused while you are there. Coaches like kids who are attentive and don't get distracted... and they especially like kids who follow directions well and don't need to be told things over and over. Listen carefully when a coach is speaking and nod your head to show that you heard him. Being a 'coachable kid' is a very important plus on your side.
6. When it comes time to show your defensive skills you will be much better taking it slow and smooth, focusing on proper mechanics. Get your feet under you and focus on making an accurate throw. The odds are, if you try too hard, rush it and throw it as hard as you can, you will boot it and throw it into the stands.
7. Before it is your turn to hit, pay close attention to the timing and speed of the pitching. You may even want to take a pitch to get your own timing down. Focus on making good contact, not over swinging and trying to kill it.
8. Stay positive. Baseball is a hard game, and all coaches know that. You will miss a ground ball or two, and you will make a lousy throw or two. You will swing and miss several pitches, and maybe lose a fly ball in the lights or something. The coach is watching how you handle these situations. Do you throw a fit, or show too much disappointment? If you fall apart when things go less than perfectly, he may decide to take another player who won't require so much help keeping his head in the game.

Don't's For Skills Evaluations

1. Arrive late to try-outs with some excuse. Not a good way to make a first impression on a coach. Make sure your parents get you there early.
2. Talk too much when you should be listening or just concentrating on the drill. Kids who talk too much in try-outs tend to talk too much in practice, and coaches don't appreciate having to compete with a player for attention. Keep quiet and focus on your game.
3. Brag about your talents or make excuses for your mistakes. Concentrate on doing each thing as well as you can, then immediately get ready for the next thing. If you miss a grounder, hustle after it and run back to the next thing. Show the coach that you have a mature attitude and can handle adversity. Try not to walk or look lazy when you could jog or hustle. Coaches love hustle.
4. Swing for the fences or try to make the spectacular play. In batting practice, the coach is looking for contact. Just hit the ball solidly and don't worry how far it goes. A big swing that doesn't hit anything looks like an out to a good coach. A hitter who makes contact winds up on base a lot in youth leagues. In the field, make the sure play most of the time. Catch the ball, then throw it. Kids who try for the great catch in the outfield often turn singles into triples. Coaches hate that.

5. Worry about your performance. Try to stay relaxed. If you wind up on Team B instead of Team A, it's probably for the best. It's better to play on a lower level team if it means you'll play more and have more success. Coaches usually end up putting kids where they'll do best. Let them see your skills and let the rest take care of itself.
6. Ask any evaluator or manager for your scores from the evaluation. They are kept confidential among the managers and will not be shared with any player or non-manager parent.

Finally...

Whatever team you wind up playing for, give it your best shot, and you'll have a successful season. Remember, there's not too many things out there better than playing baseball, so make sure you have fun. Let the coaches see what a great kid you are and how much you love the game. Be excited to be there, pay attention and hustle to and from your position at the fielding station. Show your great attitude and make it clear you love the game and you're ready to learn and have fun. Many coaches would rather have a coachable player with average skills and a great attitude than a diva player with very good skills and a poor attitude.