

Tips for Being a Great Buddy and Keeping Everyone Safe!

Being a great buddy is very easy and can make a huge impact on how much fun you and your assigned athlete have at each Miracle League game. Here are a few simple steps to being the best buddy you can be:

Introductions

- At the beginning of each game, introduce yourself to your player. This is the most important part in getting comfortable with your buddy and for your buddy getting comfortable with you. Each time you volunteer, you will be assigned to a different athlete.
- If there is anything you should know about your assigned athlete, their parent will probably tell you. However, it's always a good idea to ask if they don't offer you any information.
- Ask your assigned athlete what his/her name is and any other questions that will get a conversation going. Having trouble thinking of things to say? Try the following:
 - Are you excited to play baseball?
 - Are you a Red Sox fan? Do you have a favorite player?
 - Do you have a pet? What kind? What's its name?
 - Do you like school? What's your teacher's name?
 - Do you have any brothers or sisters? What are their names?
 - What are your favorite things to do?
- Some of our athletes don't talk – either because they are very shy or they are unable to talk. Always remember, just because your athlete can't respond to your questions, doesn't mean they can't understand you. Keep talking! Tell them about yourself, tell them about what is happening in the game, tell them about your last vacation or what activities you like to do.

Playing Baseball

- Throughout the game, try your very best to keep your player involved. Fielding is no one's favorite part of playing baseball. Here are some tips for keeping them involved:
 - Not many balls being hit? Find an extra ball to throw around the bases.
 - Other players getting to balls before yours? Try to encourage the kids to throw the balls to each other around the field.
 - Introduce your athlete to the other athletes on his/her team.
 - As always, keep the conversation going!
- After your athlete hits the ball, they can either stop at a base (any base) or run for a homerun. It's their choice.

- Athletes can either hit off a tee or be pitched to. Ask your athlete which they prefer or ask the coach for guidance.
- After your athlete crosses homeplate, be sure to give lots of high fives and/or fist bumps.
- If your athlete is in a wheelchair, move them around the field when you are in the outfield. Since they can't bend down to get a ball, get one for them.
- When running the bases with a child in a wheelchair, remember that most kids like to go **fast!** Be careful when making the turns at the bases, but otherwise, you should **run**. Be sure to ask the parents ahead of time if this is something they'd like to do.
- If your athlete needs to use the restroom during the game, take them to their parent for them to do that. Be sure that your athlete doesn't run off alone to the restroom.

After the game

- Let your athlete know that they played a terrific game and that you can't wait to play next week!
- Stay with your athlete until you meet up with his or her parents. **Never** leave your athlete alone!

Safety tips when your team is up to bat

- If your team is batting, you and your athlete should remain in the dugout until the coach tells you it's time to come out. Players who are next up to bat should remain in the On Deck circle.
- Your athlete should **never** have a bat in his hand unless it is his/her turn to bat or they are next up to bat.
- When your athlete is batting, stand far enough away so you don't get hit by the bat. Keep a look out for other kids near the batter – especially those running home from 3rd base - and stop your athlete from swinging, if necessary.
- Tell your athlete NOT to throw the bat after they have hit the ball. It should be dropped to the ground.

Safety tips when your team is out in the field

- Keep your athlete away from anyone holding a baseball bat! The child with the bat may swing it, not realizing anyone is nearby.
- Athletes who are fielding should stand no closer to home plate than the pitcher's mound.

- Always keep an eye out for balls that have been hit. Many of our athletes have slower reaction times so may not be able to get out of the way of a fast moving ball. Protect your athlete from being hit. The balls we use are much softer than regular baseballs, but it would still hurt to be hit in face.

Other safety tips

- If you feel your athlete is being unsafe and you are not sure what to do about it, ask the coach for help! Or, if the coach is busy, ask another buddy for help.