

BASEBALL COACHES DRILLBOOK



Baseball Manitoba

WEBSITES AND VIDEO LINKS

If you are looking for more baseball specific coaching information, here are some websites and video links that may help:

Websites

Webball

<http://www.webball.com/cms/>

Noblesville Baseball (Indiana) – Drill page

<http://www.noblesvillebaseball.org/Content/Coaching/Drills.aspx>

Baseball Tips

<http://balltips.homestead.com/FrontPage.html>

Coach John Peter's Baseball Tips

<http://baseballtips.com/instruction.html>

Barton's Youth Baseball

http://youthbaseball_e_zine.homestead.com/index.html

Video Links

USA Baseball Academy

<http://www.youtube.com/user/USBBaseballAcademy>

Coach Mongero – Winning Baseball

<http://www.youtube.com/user/coachmongero>

IMG Baseball Academy

<http://www.youtube.com/user/imgbaseballacademies>



NATIONAL COACH **CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**



The **Baseball Canada Initiation Coach Program** is designed to provide valuable and accessible resources and training to coaches who are introducing and continuing to work with children in community level baseball programs. And most of it is done on-line at your leisure!

The program is comprised of two parts:

- **Baseball Canada's On-line Library** - a complete resource to help get you started and a place to revisit often while you coach children's baseball. The **Better Coaches Drill Library** has hundreds of drills demonstrated through videos and images
- **Initiation Coach Clinic** - a local 4 hour, on-field clinic that you attend after completing the On-line Library. The clinic covers practice sessions, the fundamentals of the game and ethical decision making.

Each part of the program provides credits towards your status as a Baseball Initiation level coach.

Baseball Canada On-line Library module

- On completion of this module, your coaching status in the Baseball Canada Initiation Coach program will be **In Training**

Initiation Coach clinic

- On completion of this clinic, your coaching status in the Baseball Canada Initiation Coach program will be: **Trained**

As you progress through the program, you will receive a National Coaching Certification Program coaching card that indicates your status in the program.

Cost

The On-line Library is \$35.00 (plus tax). The Local Initiation Coach Clinic will cost an additional \$25.00, for a total of cost of \$60.00 (plus tax).

Further information on the program is available at: <http://nccp.baseball.ca>. or at the Baseball Manitoba website www.baseballmanitoba.ca



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THANK YOU

for coaching baseball this year!

This booklet is designed to assist you and your team by providing some direction and drills for practices and games. Please share the information in this booklet with the coaches and parents on your team. The last few pages have a sample practice plan, and blank practice plan sheets you can use.

As you get ready for the coming season, I would like to convey a couple of thoughts for you and your coaches to consider when running practices and coaching games:

You are only as strong as your weakest player

Use your practices to make all your players better, and find a way to provide some special time to the weaker players on the team. As their skill level progresses, their confidence increases, their appreciation for the game will grow, and your team will show improvement.

It's not how you start, it's how you finish

Try not to focus too much on winning, especially early in the year. Yes, baseball is a competitive game, but all teams make the play-offs. There are a lot of skills and techniques to teach, and the teams that focus on improvement will be better by the end of the year

Keep the game fun for all

This means not only the players, but also the coaches, the parents and the officials. Keep it in perspective. This is their game, so make it fun and safe.

The measure of a successful season is not in the championships won, but in the number of players that return the following season to play. Nurture a passion for baseball in your players. As a coach you can bring out the best in your players, parents and other coaches.

Good luck,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Morgan de Peña". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Morgan de Peña
Baseball Manitoba Executive Director
and Baseball Coach.

P.S. Baseball Manitoba has a selection of DVD's available at Coaching Manitoba, 2nd Floor of the Sport For Life Centre, 145 Pacific Avenue in Winnipeg.

TOP 18 REASONS TO COACH YOUTH BASEBALL

1. You get to spend most of your summer with other people's kids instead of your own.
2. You get to rake fields and set up bases just like a real grounds crew member.
3. You get credit whenever a kid isn't playing well.
4. You get to put off your vacation until right before school starts.
5. You get a great farmer's tan.
6. You get to be the last one home after a game.
7. You get thick skin by being second guessed about 2500 times or so by parents.
8. You get to spend a lot of evenings on the phone instead of with your wife.
9. You gain deeper insight into the game by hearing such novel bits of wisdom as "straighten it out" and "throw a strike" from the stands.
10. You get to drive a bunch of dirty kids around in your car.
11. You have lots of meaningful conversations with parents, like about how great their kids can pitch.
12. You get great insight into emotional disorders in children in case you want to pursue a career in counseling.
13. You get to spend your own money on extra balls and equipment.
14. You get to leave work early to get to the field early.
15. You get to leave work even earlier to pick up kids without rides.
16. You develop humility when the kids get the credit for wins and you get blamed for losses.
17. You get the honor of coaching a bunch of kids that think they're doing you a favor by showing up.
18. You get to have a party at your house after each season with your own food and pop.



Anonymous (off the Internet)

BASEBALL COACHING 101

From Junior Baseball Magazine (www.juniorbaseball.com)

We all like to think of ourselves as pretty capable at our day jobs, but when it comes to coaching kids in baseball, lack of experience can be a source of frustration and bad feelings all around.

While it helps to have played a lot of baseball yourself at some point in your life, it's not a prerequisite to being a good coach. Just like in the sport itself, coaching has certain fundamentals.

Your two biggest concerns when coaching kids at the lower levels (pre-teen) should be :

A) Make the experience fun

That means fun for the kids, and fun for you too. If everyone is having a good time, you're doing something right.

B) Teach the game

There is a multitude of books on the finer points of coaching, teaching skills, drills, etc. Take the time to read these, but first, you must know how to teach. One rule of thumb when talking to a young player one-on-one (as simple as this sounds) is to not stand over him and talk down to him. Bend over so you're face level with him, or even kneel down, so he is even with you or a little above. It's amazing how this will prevent intimidation, and rivet his attention.

Keep in mind that your highest goal at this level is to instill a love for the game in your players, so they'll want to continue playing for years to come. Helping them to succeed at the basics of the game, so that they're better at the end of season than when they began, is more important than any number of wins.



Kneeling while talking to a young player puts you on his level, and improves communication.

There are three more items of prime importance to be effective as a coach, which makes for a more successful (not to be confused with *winning*) team:

a) Require respect

Kids sense a pushover, and will take advantage and walk all over you. You'll get no drills done, no practices will be productive, games will be sloppy. The key is to set the ground rules right at the start, preferably in writing. Point out what you expect from your team, and what they can expect from you. And stick to it. Just like you must follow through with your threats of punishment with your own kids when they push it too far, you must be gentle but firm with a team.

b) Be prepared

Like a good scout, a good coach is prepared. That means you come to practices with a specific plan as to what you will be working on that day, right down to the drills and stations. Always have your equipment, plenty of practice balls, as well as first aid, an ice chest with chilled soft blue ice (for bumps and bruises) and even a cooler of ice water for hot days.

For game days, have your line-up and fielding rotations figured out the night before and charted on paper. Have a few alternatives in case some kids don't show, or get hurt. There's nothing more annoying than a team taking the field with seven players as the coach scrambles madly to figure out who played three innings, who played all game yesterday, who sits, who replaces who...while everyone stands around and waits.

c) Communicate with parents

The parents can make coaching a joy or a chore. Distribute a roster with phone numbers. Assign duties, such as snacks, field maintenance, etc. Let them know your game and practice schedules, enforce pick-up times (you're not a babysitter), and have them voice concerns to you, not behind your back.

Keep these simple concepts in mind this coming season, and you'll do fine.

HOW TO TEACH BASEBALL SKILLS

Even if you have never played or even watched baseball, you can still learn to coach successfully with this **IDEA**:

I - Introduce the skill.

- ◆ Get your players' attention.
- ◆ Name the skill.
- ◆ Explain the importance of the skill

D - Demonstrate the skill. (or have a skilled player demonstrate)

- ◆ Use the correct form.
- ◆ Demonstrate the skill several times.
- ◆ Use slow motion.
- ◆ Perform the skill at different angles.
- ◆ Demonstrate the skill from both sides of the body.

E - Explain the skill

- ◆ Show them a correct performance.
- ◆ Break down the skill into parts.
- ◆ Have each player perform each part of the skill.
- ◆ Re-explain the entire skill.
- ◆ Have players practice the entire sequence in fluid motion.



A - Attend to players practicing the skill.

- ◆ Some players may need your hands on help to grab the bat or positioning their arms.
- ◆ Walking unsure athletes through the skill will help them gain confidence to perform the skill on their own.

THE PARENTS MEETING: A Must for the Youth Baseball Coach

BY: Marty Schupak- has a Master's Degree in Physical Education from Arizona State University and his youth baseball teams have won championships year after year.

Each year I organize a parents meeting approximately two to four weeks before the start of the season. I prepare a handout of approximately three or four pages. Included is a list of the team with phone numbers and certain philosophies and organizational items.

People might say, "Well this is only youth baseball, it's not high school." This is true, but I have learned over the years that a parents meeting will make for a better run season for the kids, the parents and the coach. The meeting should not go more than ten or fifteen minutes. I leave a fair amount of time for a question and answer period.



I make this meeting a requirement for all parents. I try to lay out my goals and express to the parents about how I run my practices. Also, I tell them that players have to arrive at games 30 minutes before they start and if they cannot make a game, they must call me. It is very important that I let the parents understand I know their busy schedules and that as a coach you go through the same thing with ballet, karate, soccer, car pools, school work, etc.

Probably the most important point I go over is that because of my own busy schedule, I cannot run a taxi service for any players. Parents must be at practice five minutes before it ends. When I first began to coach, I never addressed this and after each practice I had a car full of players to drop off. As coaches, this cannot be part of our jobs for more reasons than one.

I also address any complaints parents may have during the season. I developed a standard policy of not taking any complaints for at least five games. This cuts down on a lot of phone calls and most of the times a complaint by a parent about playing time is taken care of by the sixth game.

Since I began doing this, I have had only a handful of complaints for a whole season in about the last eight years. When I first started coaching, I would go home after the game and there would be two or three messages on my answering machine.

As a coach, there are a lot of responsibilities and I try to cut down on the phone calls as much as possible. One system a lot of people use is the phone chain. This is effective only some of the time. Another system I use which is similar is the buddy system.

At the beginning of each year I ask for a couple of parent volunteers to help with the phone calls. Then I assign each player a buddy. So if there are twelve kids on the team, there are six pairs of buddies. The first thing I tell them is that if there is any question on practice time or location, call their buddy before they call me. And if their buddy isn't home, call someone else on the team list.

If it is raining, I call my two phone volunteers and divide the calls in half. Remember, each player has a buddy so they should never make more than three calls and maybe a call back to me. Any system you try isn't full proof and during the course of the season you can expect your share of calls.

There can be a whole lot of things to address at this meeting. Each coach might have their own pet peeve to discuss. The most important thing is to make sure you have each of the points you want to bring up in writing. This way, you are sure to touch on the points most important to you.

Remember, you are volunteering your time and you have a right to make the season run as smooth as possible for yourself, and that's the way you want it to be for your team as well.



TECHNIQUES FOR COACHING YOUNGER CHILDREN

By: Terry Churchfield has been a youth league coach for 16 years. He is a Pony League head coach and manager of the "Plum Stripes" 14-year old traveling baseball team. From www.baseballtips.com.

One of the greatest rewards in life may very well be that of parenthood. Having the chance to watch your children grow from "demanding" infants to "demanding" teenagers may be life's greatest compensation. Perhaps second to that honor may be the distinction of being athletic coach to your son or daughter. The problem comes when it is not just your child, but 10-or-12 other children as well. Suddenly, there is a responsibility to many while you were struggling with parenting only one or two. Once you make the decision to coach, there is no other choice in the matter than to become something that you might not know how to be.



Take it from one who has been there that this is not as tough as it may seem. First thing to remember is always be yourself. You probably already know the best lesson to learn. The problem is that most of us do not remember being seven-year old and being taken from the safety of the backyard and placed with strangers on a field bigger than the imagination. Try to see yourself through those innocent eyes, so eagerly watching the coach's every move, and try to become his or her favorite coach. The idea of being a "good person with the kids" is what youth ball is really all about. There are indeed rules to follow. Spend a few nights reading a book or two about basic ball playing; however, when putting it altogether in your mind, do so as a seven, ten, or twelve year old.

A good rule of thumb is never attend practice in a shirt and tie. Young children take notice and place themselves at a disadvantage to the authority it implies. My dad went to work wearing a shirt and tie, but when he came home to play with me, he removed them. Wear blue jeans or shorts, but be prepared to get down on your knees and talk straight into their faces one-to-one. Get down to their level. Your best player might just take on the "Giant Killer" attitude. While a six-foot coach stands high above the child's three-foot frame, he or she may feel they will be swallowed up at the first mistake. They tend to turn their backs on the coach and hide any talent they may have. A good idea is to pick out two-or-three of the second-year players and befriend them. The fact that the younger player realizes the coach's interest in the older players without fear of retaliation will make him or her more acceptable to you and your "different from my dad" personality.

Above all, make coaching challenging for you and fun for the kids. Always remind them that this is a game and that it must be fun to play. When it is not fun anymore, even you should get out and do something else.

Do not get too technical. Yeah, you must teach basics, but do it the way they would understand. Teach the "alligator." Never teach the technical way to field a ground ball. The "alligator" will accomplish the same thing. The alligator has a big mouth, and we use our hands like the alligator. The glove hand is the bottom of the alligator's mouth; the throwing hand is the top. Now get down low just like the alligator and keep your back flat. Here comes the ball, let it roll to you. Put your glove on the ground like the alligator's mouth and with the top (throwing) hand, close those jaws

down and lock that ball in your glove. Even teach them to growl while they close down the jaws. That will allow them to expend air and make the play much easier. It will also keep them from getting hurt. Follow the "alligator" with the "bird." Bring the hands to the middle of the chest and spread the wings (arms), with thumbs always downward. Flap the wings, crow hop and throw! This is not only fun, it is natural. It is basic and after a few short practice sessions, the players will be sort of fielding grounders, throwing close to first base and making many strange noises. They will be back next practice, next game, next year and who knows what could be next. "Squash the bug, ring the bell, hit the ball and run like the wind!"

Never scold or criticize in front of the entire team. Take the child aside and show them what they did wrong. Start out by praising the player about something they do correctly and then emphasizing what to do next time. Wipe their tears when they cry and laugh with them (they will be amusing) as often as you laugh at them.

Always emphasize the need for parent-to-child relationships. Allow parents to watch your coaching techniques and ask them to drill 15 minutes each day on the things taught. As the coach, you are a leader, a dad, a nurse and a best friend to the players. To the parents, you are the boss. You must know when the child comes to practice or the game and when he or she is being taken home. Discuss parents' differences face-to-face only after practice, never over the telephone. Be the coach. Reward them with high five's, handshakes, words of encouragement and above all, smiles. When a child gets a bump or bruise, be the first to his or her side. Make sure they know you care. Be sure to make practice fun and games competitive only to the point of competition itself-never for the sake of winning at all costs. Leave that must-win thing for elite leagues and colleges.

Good luck as a coach. Remember, this is their game not yours. Make sure you play everybody at least 70% of the time. I hope you enjoy coaching baseball as much as me. I have countless memories to be thankful for and would never give up the chance to do it for all the money in the world.



THE BUILDING OF A BASEBALL PLAYER

(From Dr. Elliot Johnson's Instructional Video Series)

Teaching Keys

The Teaching Keys are unique to *The Building of a Baseball Player*. These psychologically sound teaching principles will help coaches and parents enhance their communication skills by understanding kids and the developmental process. The following keys can be applied to any aspect of the game.

Section 1:

- Never overload a boy with too much information at once. The mind can only focus on one thing at a time.
- When a player steps into the batter's box in a game, he must focus on the ball, he cannot be thinking about other things, no matter how important they may be.
- Remove pressure by using positive reinforcement. It usually works much better than punishment. After all, nobody strikes out or makes an error on purpose.
- Treat each player as a unique individual. Not everyone will have the same problem.
- Make sure players have fun. Have fun yourself and project that impression. If kids don't enjoy youth sports, it's pretty hard to justify them.

Section 2:

- Discipline is good for youth, but use good judgment as you ask them to work harder than they are used to working.
- Expect all levels of ability to be represented on your team. Show consideration for each boy.
- Each person is of equal value, no matter what his skill level.
- Kids won't perform perfectly. Neither will we coach perfectly.
- The important thing is for all of us to be moving in the right direction.

Section 3:

- Kids need positive role models. Adults have much responsibility to set a good example.
- Young players are not miniature adults. It takes time for them to grow and mature. Expect them to play like kids, not like adults.
- Be honest with kids, but be encouraging at the same time
- Self-image is critical to a player's success. Try to build self-concept by setting achievable goals with him.
- Parents, most young people value your opinions more than anyone else's. They want to please both you and their coach. Parents and coaches must work together.

Section 4:

- Work to develop togetherness on the team.
- Enthusiasm for planned practices results in improved skill levels.
- Improved skills lead to confidence which overcome fear.
- Flexibility in coaching improves motivations.
- Let players have input into new drills.

Section 5:

- Physical, mental and emotional development varies greatly in youth of the same chronological age.

- Try to understand where each player is concerning his developmental traits and characteristics.
- Saturation can't replace maturation.
- How you say something is as important as what you say.
- Fear, intimidation, sarcasm, and ridicule are not valid means of motivation.

Section 6:

- Over learn at game tempo.
- Use practice time for most of your teaching.
- Keep instructions simple during games.
- Correct when players are most receptive.
- Sow good habits.





PREPARING FOR THE SEASON

Minor Ball



1. GETTING STARTED

- a) MAKE A TEAM ROSTER (player's names, address, phone numbers, parent's first names, coach's names and phone numbers).
- b) MAKE INNINGS PLAYED TRACKING SHEET (for your own benefit).
- c) PLAYER'S MEETING (welcome and introductions, goals and roles, your coaching philosophy, players' expectations, schedule for league and tournaments, schedule for practices, social activities, fundraising, questions and answers, hand out team roster and schedule).
- d) PARENT'S MEETING (welcome and introductions, team objectives, your coaching philosophy, parent's expectations, ways parents can assist and be involved, schedule for practices, games, and tournaments, arrange phone pooling and car pooling, expenses and fundraising, questions and answers).
- e) RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS (assistant coaches, manager, medical expert, fundraising, field raking, telephone caller, bring drinks, score keeper, wind-up coordinator).

2. SAFETY

- a) KNOW YOUR ATHLETES (make a list of medical numbers and emergency phone numbers, know fitness level, understand special conditions, watch after they have been sick or injured).
- b) CHECK EQUIPMENT REGULARLY (check for proper fit, cracked helmets and missing parts e.g. chin straps, throat guards).
- c) WALK THE DIAMOND (before game or practice do a safety check, survey the diamond for hazards e.g. holes in backstop, wet areas, holes, broken glass).
- d) FIRST AID KIT - for minor injuries common to baseball such as the following listed below (remember to always have another person with you when administering first aid).
 - i. BLISTERS (keep clean and cover).
 - ii. NOSEBLEED (sit with head slightly forward, pinch nose just below the hard part, breath through mouth).
 - iii. SLIDING BURNS (wash with mild cleansing solution, dry, and cover).
 - iv. SPRAINS (ice should be applied to reduce swelling. If injury is severe an x-ray should be taken).
 - v. NECK AND BACK INJURIES (if injury is severe, do not attempt to move the player, call for an ambulance).
- e) EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN (remain calm, know if any of your parents have medical training e.g. CPR or doctor or nurse, know where the nearest phone is and emergency numbers, tend to the injured player until medical personnel arrive).

3. EQUIPMENT

- GLOVE (properly sized, good quality leather, not plastic, or mom or dad’s old softball glove).
- SHOES (properly fitted, running shoes or rubber cleats).
- UNIFORMS (long sleeve undershirts same color, hats).
- BALLS (minimum 1 ball per two players [not a lot more], nice to have whiffle balls and soft baseballs).
- HELMETS (check for cracks and if any, replace; minimum 4 double ear flaps with chin straps. Helmets should be worn when on deck, at bat, on base).
- BATS (proper length and weight, check for cracks, dents, worn grips, [not for hitting stones, posts, pegs, or people]).
- CATCHER’S EQUIPMENT (properly sized and adjusted, catcher’s helmet and mask with throat protector, belly protector, shin guards, catchers mitt, athletic supporter and cup).
- PROTECTIVE CUP (strongly recommended for all players, mandatory for catchers).
- HOMEPLATE, 3 BASES WITH PEGS, MEASURING TAPE, AND HAMMER.

4. SETTING UP THE DIAMOND

- SURVEY FIELD FOR OBSTRUCTIONS
- DIMENSIONS

	<u>Mosquito</u>	<u>Pee Wee</u>	<u>Bantam</u>	<u>Midget/Junior</u>
- BASEPATHS -	60 ft	70 ft	80 ft	90 ft
- HOME TO SECOND	84 ft 10 in	99 ft	113 ft. 1½ in	127 ft 3 3/8 in
- PITCHING DISTANCE	44 ft		48 ft	54 ft 60 ft

5. WARM UP

- WARM UP TO THROW; NOT THROW TO WARM UP.
- START WITH EASY RUN.
- STRETCHING AND EXERCISES (mix in different stretches, and running/coordination drills - skipping, running through cones, shuffles, quick feet, etc.).
- RUN (one lap slow, next one medium, last lap fast).

7. THROWING

- a) FIND THE GRIP (pads across seams, finger width apart, thumb under ball, gap at base of thumb).
- b) STARTER STEP (small forward step with power foot (throwing side foot), 30 to 45 degree angle, look at target).
- c) ARM DOWN POSITION (throwing hand straight down by the hip).
- d) ARM BACK POSITION (throwing hand straight back, hand on top of ball, glove shoulder and hip point at target, weight on power foot, sight with lead shoulder).
- e) STEP AND THROW (step forward with glove foot, plant foot pointed at target, arm continues forward with elbow pointed out and ball close to head, rear hip and shoulder turn forward toward target, pull lead shoulder down).
- f) FOLLOW THROUGH (extend arm forward, snap wrist, throwing hand in opposite pocket and shoulder pointed towards target, swing power leg (throwing side leg) forward).

8. CATCHING

- a) READY TO CATCH (body in front of the ball, legs shoulder length apart knees bent, both arms forward with elbows slightly bent, eyes focused on the ball, throwing hand next to the glove)
- b) CATCH MADE ABOVE THE WAIST (thumbs up)
- c) CATCH MADE BELOW THE WAIST (little fingers together)

- d) CUSHION THE BALL (catch with two hands, in palm of glove, bend your elbows and bring hands towards body)
- e) PREPARE TO THROW (watch the ball into palm of glove, throwing hand immediately covers the ball and finds the grip)
- f) MOVE TO THE BALL (not just reach for the ball, but move the feet – shuffle or step – to make the catch)

9. FIELDING GROUND BALLS

- a) RELAXED POSITION (position before the pitch, face the batter with glove leg slightly forward, feet shoulder length apart, weight on balls of the feet, knees bent with hands resting on the knees)
- b) READY POSITION (position as the pitch is thrown, feet slightly wider, hands extended out and down with elbows between the knees, seat down and head up)
- c) RECEIVING THE GROUND BALL (move quickly behind the ball, extend both hands out front with glove web on ground, extend glove leg forward, head and seat down)
- d) SUCK IT UP (show the button of your cap – “head down”, watch the ball into the palm of glove, suck the ball up into the stomach with both hands, elbows past the waist, grip the ball)
- e) STARTER STEP, ARM DOWN POSITION, ARM BACK POSITION, FOLLOW THROUGH

10. FIELDING FLY BALLS

- a) READY POSITION (eyes fixed on the ball, feet shoulder width apart, weight on the balls of the feet, balanced stance allows quick movement in all directions)
- b) FIELDING A FLY BALL - FOREHAND (use cross over step, run quickly to the ball with hands down, keep eyes on the ball)
- c) FOREHAND CATCH (when you get to the ball, reach up with both hands, keep thumbs together and catch the ball in the palm of the glove)
- d) FIELDING A FLY BALL - BACKHAND (use cross over step, run quickly to the ball with hands down, keep eyes on the ball)
- e) BACKHAND CATCH (when you get to the ball, reach up with both hands, keep thumbs together and catch the ball in the palm of the glove)

11. BASERUNNING

- a) HOME TO FIRST (immediately after contact the bat is dropped, eyes focus on first base, all out sprint from batter’s box directly to first base)
- b) GROUND BALL TO THE INFIELD (1/3 way down the baseline a quick look to see where the ball is, run through first base, keep eyes on the base, touch the front of the base with either foot, after crossing first slow down while looking over right shoulder for possible missed ball)
- c) BASE HIT THROUGH THE INFIELD (1/3 way down the baseline a quick look to see where the ball is, 2/3 way down the baseline begin to curve out [BANANA] allowing good turn to second, keep eyes on the base, contact the base on the inside with either foot, head straight for second base, keep your eyes on the ball)

12. SLIDING (feet first only)

- a) SLIDE ON ALL CLOSE PLAYS (approach base with body erect, eyes on the base, slide without hesitation). Do not slide into first base.
- b) TUCKED or BENT LEG SLIDE (begin slide early, take off on whichever foot is natural, kick one leg up and tuck other leg under the knee of the extended leg, throw both hands up in the air, slide on the seat and back)
- c) PRACTICE IS FUN (tell players in advance to wear old clothes, start in soft grassy area, wear only running shoes or socks, throw base down loose don’t spike down)

13. HITTING

- a) **BAT SELECTION** (assist player choosing a bat suited to physical size and ability, most tend to choose a bat that is too big, stress bat speed)
- b) **GRIP** (held loose with the fingers not the palms of the hands, align second set of knuckles on both hands, choke up for better bat control)
- c) **DISTANCE FROM THE PLATE** (feet are parallel to the plate, position so bat covers hitting zone when bat and arms are extended away from the body while taking a forward stride)
- d) **THE STANCE** (relaxed grip, hands are back at shoulder level, arms away from body with rear elbow slightly up, shoulders and hips level, head steady with chin over front shoulder, eyes level and fixed on the ball, body is balanced with knees slightly bent and feet shoulder width apart with front foot slightly turned)
- e) **STEP AND COCK** (as pitch is delivered, shift weight to the rear foot and take a short gliding step towards the pitcher, hands pulled back slightly, head steady, eyes on the ball, chin on front shoulder)
- f) **SWING** (pivot back foot - pretend they are squishing a bug under the ball of their back foot), and brace front foot, toe pointed between first and second for right handed batter, hips open quickly, throw hands and bat towards the ball to get level swing, (action more like a pushing of the back arm). Arms do not extend until after contact, the bat is over the hitting zone of the plate, weight shifts to front foot, head and eyes down on the ball.
- g) **FOLLOW THROUGH** (hips and upper body face pitcher, arms take a natural full follow through, both hands stay on the bat, eyes stay focused on ball, chin ends on back shoulder, body balanced at finish)

14. PRACTICE PLANS

- a) EVERY PRACTICE IS PLANNED AND HAS A PURPOSE
- b) 90 MINUTES MAXIMUM
- c) BEGIN WITH WARM-UP AND EXERCISE
- d) PROCEED TO THROWING AND CATCHING DRILLS
- e) REVIEW SKILLS TAUGHT LAST PRACTICE AND TEACH A NEW SKILL
- f) USE SMALL GROUPS WHEN DOING DRILLS, SO PLAYERS ARE NOT WAITING
- g) INCLUDE A GAME TYPE COMPONENT, RELAYS, COMPETITIONS HAVE SOME FUN
- h) EVERY PRACTICE IS DIFFERENT AND HAS 7 OR 8 COMPONENTS
- i) END WITH A TEST, EITHER VERBAL OR BY DEMONSTRATION TO SEE IF THE SKILL TAUGHT IS UNDERSTOOD

15. GAME DAY

BEFORE THE GAME

- ARRIVE AT THE FIELD IN LOTS OF TIME
- MAKE SURE YOU HAVE FIRST AID KIT
- CHECK THE FIELD FOR HAZARDS
- PREPARE THE FIELD SET UP THE BASES
- MAKE SURE VOLUNTEERS ARE READY AND KNOW THEIR DUTIES
- ENSURE ALL PLAYERS WARM UP PROPERLY
- SET UP YOUR BATTING ORDER AND STARTING LINEUP
- PLAN YOUR SUBSTITUTIONS
- EXCHANGE LINE UP WITH OTHER COACH
- HAVE A SHORT MEETING WITH YOUR PLAYERS

DURING THE GAME

- BE ENTHUSIASTIC, CREATE A HAPPY POSITIVE MOOD
- MAKE SUBSTITUTIONS SO EVERYONE HAS EQUAL CHANCE TO PLAY
- SET A GOOD EXAMPLE IN DEALING WITH UMPIRES AND THE OTHER TEAM
- HAVE FUN

AFTER THE GAME

- MAKE SURE PLAYERS SHAKE HANDS WITH THE OTHER TEAM
- PROVIDE PLAYERS WITH ENCOURAGEMENT AND POSITIVE FEEDBACK
- SAY SOMETHING POSITIVE TO EACH PLAYER INDIVIDUALLY
- MAKE ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT UPCOMING PRACTICES OR GAMES
- ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:
 1. **Did my players have fun?**
 2. **Was there an equal opportunity for everyone to play?**
 3. **Was it a good experience for everyone?**



HOW TO MAKE PRACTICES MORE FUN

By Brian Priebe, Assistant Coach, Saint Augustine High School, San Diego, CA

Should youth baseball coaches and parents focus on making players work hard to improve their skills? Or should leagues for young players be about kids having fun?

Certainly, as players advance to higher levels, the stakes for winning and losing become greater-- national recognition and exposure, college scholarships, the pro draft, etc. And without a doubt, discipline and hard work are keys to developing exceptional athletic skills.

But even in the most serious high school and college baseball programs, having fun on the field is critical to a team's long-term success. The best coaches incorporate regular doses of "fun drills" in their practice plans. In fact, the more intense their approach to practices and games, the greater the need is to make their practices fun.

Why and when to use fun drills

Fun drills are some of the more effective tools in a coach's bag of tricks. They are used at different times for different reasons.

- ◆ **Reward a great performance.** Young ball players need a lot of positive reinforcement, especially when they play well. Fun drills are an excellent way to pat the players on the back for a job well done.
- ◆ **Forget a bad loss.** Teams naturally get discouraged after being routed by an opponent. Fun drills can help players snap out of their funk and put the loss behind them. Even if your team gave the game away or played far below their potential, you may sense that a fun practice will put them back in the mood to work at improving their skills.
- ◆ **Avoid boredom and burnout.** Young ball players grow bored rather quickly when repeating the same old drills or batting practice over and over. One way to keep practices fresh and exciting is with fun drills. Coaches can still develop the same basic skills and techniques while the players enjoy a drill they've never done before.
- ◆ **Near the end of a long season.** As the final game of the season approaches, even the most avid ball players may have trouble staying focused. Their thoughts turn to camping trips or the start of a new season in their "second" favorite sport. Fun drills are sometimes the best bet to captivate the attention of young ball players.
- ◆ **When the kids are physically or mentally tired.** The day after a hard work out or grueling game, young ball players may possess the desire to practice, but lack the energy to be sharp. Instead of setting them up to fail, utilize the natural tonic of fun and laughter to salvage something constructive from your practice the "day after".
- ◆ **When the kids are physically present, but mentally absent.** Coaches must gauge the mood of the team, and know when to push harder and when to lighten up. They must be able to adapt quickly and change the practice plan on the spot. On those days when no amount of verbal inspiration seems to wake up the players, fun drills may be the only way to work on baseball skills.
- ◆ **Promote bonding among teammates.** Laughter helps the players enjoy the company of their teammates, and encourages them to become better friends, to watch out for each other, and put forth extra effort for the team.
- ◆ **Before the "big" game.** If a team is nervous prior to playing a tournament or championship game, a serious practice may only heighten their anxiety. Fun and laughter can relax them, give them something else to think about, and thus, boost their confidence.

- ◆ To reduce stress. School, and other aspects of normal life, can generate stress in young players. A rigorous practice, when piled on top of other demands, may lead to mediocre performances in all areas. Under these conditions, the coach should sometimes allow the diamond to be the players' place to escape and unwind for an hour or two. This can have a lasting impact on their mental health, and ultimately, on their performance in the ensuing games.

Tips for designing "fun" practices

- a) The simplest way to create a fun practice is to play inter-squad games and modify the rules. For example, play a game where base runners must run the bases in reverse order-- third, second, first, then home. Another idea is to remove first and third base all together and run from home to second and back.
- b) Play inter-squad games where the players choose their own teams and line-ups. You can also establish a rule that every player must assume a defensive position different from their normal position-- catchers play shortstop, right fielders pitch, and so on.
- c) Another type of inter-squad game that really lightens the mood has the coaches participating in the field and hitting. Youth leaguers jump at the chance to strike out "the Coach" or test the strength of his throwing arm.
- d) Play an "every ball is fair" inter-squad game. Expand fair territory to include all the foul territory, and maybe even the area beyond the fences. As long as the players remain safe while fielding the ball, these games are sure to produce laughter.
- e) Another simple approach to inventing fun drills is to select a single baseball skill or game situation, divide the team into two groups, and devise a system of scoring points for execution. You are limited only by your imagination. The mere act of injecting competition into an otherwise dull drill magically transforms the players' attitudes and energy level. For example, do "competition running". Split your team evenly at second base and home plate. Race the two teams against each other-- one player at a time on each side traveling half way around the bases. Fatigue and aches vanish when you pit them against each other in a friendly situation. Smiles cover the players' faces and cheers of encouragement fill the air as they vie for the coveted honor of being "faster than so-and-so". Turning drills into competitions works for everything from the simple act of fielding ground balls to executing squeeze bunts.



Remember, whether conducting an inter-squad game or scoring points at a specific skill, the coach is the ultimate umpire and rule maker on the field. Take advantage of this to make the contest even more hilarious by calling all the "bang-bang" plays so that both teams have an equal chance to win up until the very end.

- f) Hit fungos to two groups of players where they score one point for each successful catch. Periodically, hit a "bonus" ball worth five points. Even something as effortless as allowing bonus points is enough to spice up a drill.
- g) Glove Hacky-Sack. Divide the team into groups of four or five. Arrange each group in a circle facing inward, and give each a baseball. The object is to see which group can keep the ball suspended off the ground for as long as possible. There are two rules. 1.

No player can catch or hold the ball - they must pass it back and forth among the players in the circle. 2. A player can touch the ball only with his glove.

- h) "Phantom Infield". Run through a regular pre-game infield-outfield warm up-- without a ball! For sound effects, have one player stand off to the side with two bats in hand and clank them together every time the coach hits an imaginary fungo to a fielder. Encourage the players to catch the invisible ball using their best diving and twirling moves. Under the right conditions, this drill can leave the players rolling on the ground with laughter.
- i) Hot-weather sliding practice. Save sliding practice for a day when it's too hot to do much else. Spread out a "wet willie" mat on the outfield grass. Douse it with a water hose. Have the players remove the shoes and socks and get wet!
- j) Hawaiian Shorts day. Especially if you adhere to a dress code throughout the season, let the kids wear their wildest, most comfortable clothes to the last practice of the season. Coaches must dress crazy too.

Have your cake and eat it too

Players truly enjoy performing "fun" drills. They feel as though they are getting off easy by not having to "work". In reality, the players still develop their skills and their bodies. Any drill that involves running, throwing, hitting, or fielding at a minimum improves a player's physical conditioning.

Some of these drills are designed to be "work" in disguise. For example, conduct a home run derby on a field with a short fence. While the players pretend to be Barry Bonds or Ken Griffey, Jr., they actually hone their talent for hitting sacrifice flies to drive in a runner from third base.

Maximize the value of fun drills at the end of practice by drawing a parallel between the techniques used in the fun drill and the game situation in which the players will need that technique.



Keep Them Coming Back For More

If physical conditioning is the theme for a given practice, instead of having the players run wind sprints, put them in the outfield grass, toss a football or soccer ball in their midst, and have them "run" for a half hour.

Or play some variation of the Forward Pass game. Split the squad in half. Each team has one quarterback and one wide receiver at a time. The wide receiver sprints out and scores points for catching a bomb. Set a time limit, and watch them go!

Dog owners know that by wrapping the "medicine" inside a treat, not only does the medicine go down smooth, but the dog comes running with tail wagging when its time for the next "pill". The laughter and relaxation experienced during fun drills may be just the ticket to keep players coming back to the park day after day, week after week. Making the park a fun place to be can go a long way toward maintaining the players' love of the game and desire to do what it takes to excel.

WAYS TO MAKE PRACTICES AND GAMES MORE FUN

From hastingslittleleague.com

A POPULAR REFRAIN AMONG PARENTS and youth baseball coaches these days laments the loss of fun in the game of baseball in general and in youth baseball in particular. Too many coaches, many of us worry, think only about winning. They exert too much pressure on players to perform beyond unreasonable standards.

But what can be done? Well, for one thing, how about putting the experiences of players before the desires of adults?

Perhaps you've heard of a few ways to spice up the game: play more pickup games, have a home run derby, hit opposite-handed, organize a throwing competition, use water balloons occasionally in batting practice, conduct sliding practice on a slip-and-slide with water from a hose running on it, bunt into specified areas away from home plate that have \$1 bills placed there for players who hit the mark, eat watermelon after practice, have players pull their baseball pant legs up to their knees for that old-timey look, or have them roll up their sleeves.

Not all such ideas involve antics. Some involve thoughtfully organizing and conducting practices. Others are about working hard and working on correct mechanics. But all of them can help enrich a player's experience in the sport. Here's a list of ideas you may want to consider.

BE POSITIVE AND LET EVERY PLAYER PLAY

1. Have many short practices as opposed to a few long ones.
2. Organize practice so there's no downtime. Don't let kids stand around watching for long periods of time.
3. Break into small groups of four or five when teaching new skills. This allows the players more "hands-on" time, which is what makes baseball fun.
4. Make "games" out of practice. When practicing bunting, place various targets near home plate that are worth different amounts of points. When a player bunts a ball that hits the target, he gets points. Keep track of each player's points and declare the bunting champion of the day. This type of activity can be incorporated into the practice of almost any skill.
5. Bring drinks for after practice as a surprise.
6. In games, give each player that is not in the starting lineup a certain responsibility, such as keeping track of the balls and strikes thrown by his team's pitcher (or the opponent's) or where each of his teammates (or the opposing team) hits the ball. This will allow players to feel like part of the team even when not playing.
7. Stay positive during games. Practice is the place to work out problems.
8. Let every kid play in each game. If this is not possible, let those kids that didn't get into a game play more than usual in the next one.
9. Sit on the bench during the game and talk baseball with the players. They'll love it!



YOUTH BASEBALL PRACTICES DON'T HAVE TO BE LONG TO BE GOOD

by Marty Schupak

Back in the late 70's an old college professor of mine was fond of saying, "Don't confuse activity with accomplishment." Jump forward about eight years and imagine me observing a coach running practice for his Little League team. At the start of practice most of the 10, 11, and 12 year olds are very enthusiastic. As the practice progresses I notice only two forms of activity taking place. One has the head coach throwing batting practice, with each hitter getting 10 to 15 swings while each pitcher takes a turn throwing to the assistant coach as the others stand and watch. I, too, stand and watch and I don't know who is more bored - the players or me. When I saw a member of the board of directors, I commented on how poorly I thought the practice had been run. The board member responded, "If you think you can do a better job, then volunteer to coach." (Me and my big mouth!)

But I did just that. And my first practice, though planned differently, ended up being two tedious hours of batting practice and pitchers throwing on the sidelines. Exactly what I had been so critical of myself! After that first practice I told my wife that there must be a better way. Even though I had a master's degree in Physical Education, baseball was the major sport I was least knowledgeable about.

So, I decided to research alternative practice methods. I observed a variety of teams during practice ranging from 7 year olds to college level players. I noticed that the best practices were not necessarily the longest and that the most organized coaches wasted little time. On most of the drills every player was involved. It was amazing the way some coaches integrated fun and learning and how creative some of the drills and games were.

I began to use some of these techniques with my team. After a little trial and error I was actually able to run a more effective practice in half the time.

To run a practice like this does take preparation, mostly at the beginning of the season. But coaches need not look at this as a chore. It can be as much fun for you as it is for the players.

The youth baseball coach, no matter what level they are at, should make a list of drills at the beginning of the year that they are interested in trying. The idea is to be creative. When my oldest son was 8, I began a practice with a simple relay race, consisting of two lines of six players each. To put a baseball theme into the race, I had each player wear their glove and hold two baseballs in it. The learning benefit of this relay race was to teach kids the importance of squeezing the glove. Another year I was teaching players how to bunt. When the team took batting practice, I put one cone 10 feet directly in front of home plate and another cone 10 feet to the left of the plate. Each player gets two bunts before his regular swings. For each bunt that goes between the cones, the player earns two extra swings. This motivated the players to focus when they bunted. And, it worked!

If a coach plans five to seven drills of ten to twelve minutes in length for each practice, the players will be more attentive and less bored. Don't worry about players not liking certain drills. About a third through the season they will let you know which ones to weed out.

The youth baseball season is unlike any other season. Fathers sneak out of work early, families rarely eat dinner before 8:30 at night and the laundry rooms active day and night. As parents and coaches, we should make practices more interesting and fun because during a typical youth league season, players spend as much or more time practicing than in actual games. So, be creative and have a great baseball season.

A BASIC PRACTICE PLAN

The following provides some direction for a basic practice plan

Warm Up . This is especially important in developing long-term physical fitness awareness for your players and greatly reduces the risk of injury to your players. If your team is like most, the kids will 'wander' onto the practice field. Do low impact 'games' with them while waiting for everyone to show. When the warm-up 'officially' begins, first demonstrate the exercise and then begin the exercise. Be sure to explain the exercise in words the players can understand. Sometimes you will have to teach them new words for this to work. Be sure that you participate with them, because the players will learn quickest by example. And if you can, get the parents to participate as well!

Team Talk Have a brief Team Talk with them and let them know what you want to accomplish today and what you expect of them today. Keep it simple and in words they can understand. This should take 2 minutes, 1 minute to get them quiet!

Skill Development Begin skill development drills and exercises. Spend the first 10 minutes improving skills taught in previous practices. You will need to focus on the less-talented players at this time to help them improve at a quicker pace. Consider providing these players a 'mentor', another player or adult that can show them good execution of the skill. This mentoring approach also keeps more players busy and 'engaged' providing more fun and participation.

After the review, begin introducing a new skill 'game' or technique. You should strive to introduce one new skill, or a variation or refinement of a skill at every practice session. This may require a brief Team Talk with the players to provide a foundation of words or expectations. First explain the skill, and then with other assistants, if necessary, demonstrate the skill using proper technique. Then turn the players loose to try it themselves.

Once they begin the skill development exercise, try to keep further instruction and refinement to a minimum, and spend your time one-on-one with the players. Having other volunteers and coaches manage the 'team' allows you to spend some 'quality time' with each player while they are striving to learn. If you have an exceptional player or two, place them in a mentoring position with another players.

Water Break: If you are in warm or summer conditions, take a 3 to 5 minute water break. Have the players' gather in the Team Talk location and use this as a brief cool-down. You can have an assistant or player 'serve' the water and you can use this opportunity to reinforce the skill(s) just practiced. No pop!

Play. Play a modified game or small-sided game / scrimmage. This will increase the likelihood that the skills you have just introduced or have previously introduced have real-world (read game-time) implications. Here are a few tips to ensure a successful (read fun and educational) scrimmage:

- Be sure to have the player's rotate positions so that each player can understand the requirements of the position, and possibly develop an appreciation of other players that play that position.
- Have a couple of players be assistant coaches and officials. This encourages these players to understand the rules and really teaches a sense of fair play.
- Play for a pre-determined amount of time, not until a scrimmage team reaches a certain score.
- Focus on only one or two rules or skills at a time. Trying to teach too many skills / rules at a time can be overwhelming for most players.

Team Talk. This provides time for the players to cool-down and reflect on their recent accomplishments. It also provides a time for you to repeat today's instructions and to communicate with your players. This may take 10 minutes, 2 minutes to get them quiet!

A sample agenda on the closing Team Talk could include the following:

- Ask the players to tell the team what they learned today. Try to refrain from using "Yes" or "No" questions. Don't force a player to make provide an answer to your questions. He may be too tired or mentally drained to answer your question. If they give you an inattentive answer, simply acknowledge their answer with a nod, smile or "that's interesting" and move on to the next player.
- Talk to the team about a particular rule or situation that may have happened in practice or the last game. For instance, "Johnny was called out at second in our scrimmage. Can anybody explain why?" (Running outside of the baseline, tagged out, or force out).
- Ask the players what they would like to do in the next practice. This will give you a good pulse on what part of the game is the most fun, and will let you use this in between "less fun" activities.
- If your team is old enough or if you choose to use the "mentoring" practice, assign some players to be officials, assistants or mentors for the next practice. This creates enthusiasm for practice for these players, and is especially useful with less enthusiastic players.
- If you're going to give the players 'homework', now would be the time to do so. Give them very specific instructions on skills and rules they should practice and learn. For younger children you should provide this information as note cards or flash cards. Then see how many of them completed last week's homework. Test them with simple questions.
- Summarize your discussion and repeat the important teachings of the day. With younger kids a small 'reward' can help keep the players' attention. (Bubble gum, etc . . .)
- Make a game out of wrapping up the practice. Have the players' pack up the equipment, balls, retrieve the bases or cones, etc . . .



PRACTICE DOESN'T MAKE PERFECT. PERFECT PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

From: Bill and Cal Ripken

The most complex plays in baseball can be broken down into very simple parts. A double play, for instance, is nothing more than someone fielding a groundball and throwing it to a teammate who catches it and throws it to another teammate who catches it. In its simplest terms a double play is no more than a catch, a throw, a catch, a throw and a catch. Simple, right? It is if a solid fundamental base has been developed.

We need fundamental development when we are working with baseball players at any level. Fundamentals do not have to be boring? Conduct fundamental station and drill work every practice four basic areas — pitching, hitting, infield and outfield – and the kids have a ball. Make every kid go through each station because all players need to learn proper throwing mechanics (covered in the pitching station); all players need to learn how to field a groundball properly (infield station); all young players love to hit, which is the most technical part of the game (hitting station); and everyone on a baseball field, at some point, must catch a flyball or pop-up and learn to communicate effectively (outfield station). At first kids ask us why they have to go through all the stations. Even 8-year-olds see themselves as pitchers, shortstops or center fielders.

Make sure to explain the why of every drill. There is a solid reason behind everything taught on the baseball field. Most times, when you can explain why, it gives you instant credibility as a coach and kids are happy to perform the tasks once they understand the spirit behind them.

The fundamental teachings of fun and improvement involve the following basic principles: Put the kids in small groups so they get plenty of individual attention understand their attention spans and move them to different stations after short periods of instruction and drills keep them active to avoid having players stand around for long periods of time.

Many coaches don't have the luxury of a full staff of assistants, but usually there are parents around to help. One solution is for the head coach to hold a preseason meeting to ask if one or two parents can help out at each practice. Parents can rotate throughout the season so assisting at practice does not become a burden.

Practices should be geared toward a particular age group's attention span. The youngest players should not practice for more than an hour. Again, break the players into groups and rotate them among different stations: batting practice, baserunning, ground balls, fly balls, throwing, etc. Sometimes stations can be combined. For instance, one group can be hitting while another is working on baserunning and another is shagging hit balls. The group that is shagging can also be hit groundballs and flyballs between pitches.

For older teams, if there are strategies or team fundamentals that need to be addressed, that can be accomplished together as a team, keeping in mind that kids' attention spans vary. At some point, if they are not getting it, move on and come back to it later.

Creativity is another key to keeping practice fun. Come up with creative ways to teach the fundamentals. For kids, practicing the same drills over and over can become boring and tedious. Taking those same drills and introducing an element of competition increases the focus and enjoyment for the kids. Turn the drills into contests and award prizes to the winners. Keep in mind that competition drives all of us.

Make the game fun for you, your kids and your team.

PRACTICE PLANNING

PARTS OF EVERY PRACTICE

1.	Warm-up	(10-15 minutes)
2.	Throwing routines	(10 minutes)
3.	Defensive routines	(10 minutes)
4.	Unit drills	(10-15 minutes)
5.	Team Offensive drills	(10 minutes)
6.	Team Defensive drills	(10-15 minutes)
7.	Batting practice	(30-40 minutes)
8.	Running/conditioning	(5 minutes)
TOTAL TIME		95-120 minutes

Additional Options

- a) Arm conditioning (long toss) (10 minutes)
- b) Infield/Outfield (10 minutes)

Listed below are some sample stretches and running routines

STRETCHES (10 minutes)

Standing

- ◆ loosen neck (side to side 5-7 times)
- ◆ shoulder shrugs (forward 10, backward 10)
- ◆ arm circles (back and forward, smaller to bigger, 4 steps 4 each)
- ◆ trunk rotations (arms out, body up, feet apart, keep hips facing forward, rotate slowly 5 each side)

Sitting/lying down

- ◆ hamstring stretch (sit on floor with legs straight and try to touch toes)
- ◆ quad stretch (lie on side, grasp foot and try to touch heel to butt while keeping body straight)
- ◆ groin stretch (sitting up, feet together with knees bent, gently try to push knees to ground)
- ◆ calf stretch (standing: stagger feet and lean forward, keeping feet flat on ground)

Standing

- ◆ rotator cuff stretches: arm behind head, arm across chest

RUN DRILLS - 2 of each (4 minutes) run for form and technique, not speed

- ◆ heel to butt (kicking butt with heel to follow through the stride)
- ◆ high knees (players lift knees as high as they can while pumping arms)
- ◆ 1/2 speed sprint (concentrating on arm action and leg lift)
- ◆ backwards (reach back with leg, not just backpedal)
- ◆ sideways shuffle (face same direction going left and right, move feet quickly and low to ground, not a hopping motion)
- ◆ karaoka (legs crossing as they run sideways i.e. moving left: right leg in front, right leg behind, repeat with each step)

PRACTICE NOTES

1. Re-evaluate your practice when completed
2. Take notes on your practice checklist
3. Keep your practice plans on file

THE READY POSITION

The most important position in baseball

One of the first instructions youth league fielders hear repeated over and over is, "Get Ready!". Players in the field are always being reminded by coaches and parents to assume a proper 'Ready Position'. The reason for this is that the ready position is the most important step to good defensive play. The quickest way for a young player to improve his defensive play is to develop the habit of being in a 'ready' position on every pitch. Unfortunately, many players are never taught what a good 'ready' position is.

It all starts with the ' Ready' position.

Baseball is the only sport where the defense puts the ball in play. Utilizing a good ready position (both physically and mentally) gives the defense a huge advantage over the offense. "When you get in the ready position, you need to be ready to field a hot line drive AND be ready to move!". Many players forget the second part - get ready to move! They crouch down with their feet very wide, their gloves almost on the ground, and their palms facing the hitter. When the ball comes, these players probably look like they're holding a skillet rather than a glove! Prior to each pitch the fielder must prepare his mind and his body to anticipate the play that will develop. When a fielder is properly prepared, he is ready to make the correct play on any ball that is hit. This readiness requires two distinct movements or actions. As the fielder awaits the pitch he moves into the first set position, and then just as the pitch is being thrown he moves into the second ready position.



The set position is the same for infielders and outfielders. Begin by spreading your feet more than shoulder's width apart. By doing so, you will have a balanced and comfortable base of support. Next, turn your toes out slightly, and then drop your throwing-side foot a little further back than your glove-hand foot. Spreading your feet like this will make it easier for you to go right or left, and to break for balls that are hit to your bare-hand side. Bend your knees comfortably. Rest your hands on your knees with your head up and your back straight. Your heels should be lightly on the ground with your weight distributed a little forward on the balls of your feet.

Once you are in the set position, activate your baseball brain and concentrate on developing your fielding mind set. Survey the field and observe the batter and any runners that are on base. How many outs are there? What play or plays are most likely to develop? Notice the distance between you and the other fielders. Are you positioned properly, or should you move and set up in a different location? If the ball is hit at you, to the right, left, or past you, what is your assignment? What throws will be made, and where are your back-up positions? Finally, say to yourself: "Hit the ball to me! I'm ready. Hit it to me!". Because you are now prepared and know what to do when the ball comes. You want the batter to hit it to you!

Now that you want the ball, watch for your pitcher to begin his delivery. Just before the pitcher releases the ball to the plate, move into your ready position. Your eyes should be focused intently on the strike zone. Be sure to avoid the mistake of trying to follow the ball from the pitcher's hand to the batter. Watch the hitter's strike zone only! That is the place where the ball will be struck and hit toward you.

If you are playing the outfield, you too have some thinking to do. The set and ready positions are as important for you as for your teammates in the infield. Before the pitch is delivered, pre-plan your personal fielding strategy. Be alert for any instructions that are provided from your coaches in the dugout. Think over the game situation, and direct your concentration to create your fielder's mindset. As the pitcher winds to throw the pitch, take a short, quick step forward with both feet and assume your 'Ready' position. Your knees and lower body will be bent less than the infielders. Your back is straight, head up, and your eyes are fixed on the batter. By watching the batter, you will see how he strides and the type of swing he takes. It is important for outfielders to watch the hitter's bat as it comes through the strike zone. The bat angle and the location of the pitch will help you judge the flight of the ball. This will help you in your initial break toward the ball. Just like your infield teammates, in your 'Ready' position you are prepared to explode your muscles forward, backward, up, down, right, or left, depending on where the ball is hit. Always stay mentally and physically prepared to make the next play. Do not daydream or allow your attention to wander. Baseball is an exciting game of strategy, and it is never boring. A player who complains that he is bored is a player who has ceased to think about the game. Keep your mind in the game. Think ahead, and be smart! With this type of concentration, you will be 'ready' to make all the necessary plays at your position.



Remember, as soon as the pitcher takes the set position:

1. Feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart.
2. Knees Bent
3. Weight leaning forward
4. Head Up
5. Eyes on the strike zone
6. Hands in front with wrists neutral.
7. When the pitcher begins to throw take two baby steps forward. This puts the weight on balls of the feet.

Just as a hitter needs to stay relaxed to be quick, the same also applies to an infielder. The 'Ready' position, if not done properly, can create a couple of problems for the fielder:

- It's not very comfortable to be too low, which can cause tension - Not only in the legs, but in the arms and hands as well.
- It's not the best position to be ready to move. You're certainly not going to stay that low as you go after a hard ground ball hit 15 feet to your right.
- Often the first reaction is to 'come up'. and often the ball stays down!

Your Pre-Pitch Routine

Most players devise a pre-pitch routine that puts them in the 'Ready' position as the ball crosses the plate. This may be a shuffle of the feet, a little hop, or a "cha-cha-cha" dance. Whatever method you use, make sure you're balanced, comfortable, and ready to move. Get your momentum moving forward. Don't sit back on your heels. You want to be aggressive and play the ball rather than have the ball play you. This can only be done if you're moving forward and ready. Now. Let's go field some grounders!!

BETWEEN INNINGS WARM-UP

From baseballexcellence.com

OK, your team has just taken the field for their defensive half of the inning. How do they use that time? Do they walk onto the field or do they jog? Is the catcher in the dugout looking for his gear and does the pitcher have to warm up by throwing to the third baseman? Why can't the right fielder find his glove? Why do these times in the game often look like a disorganized fire drill before every inning? Let's go over some things your team should be doing in order to get the most benefit from their defensive half of an inning.

Here is an all too typical youth baseball scene: The infielders walk, and sometimes it looks like they're dragging, to their positions and the catcher is in the dugout getting his gear on. The middle infielders are together on the grass taking ground balls from the first baseman and they are flipping them to him. They are flipping them to him because they are only about 20 feet away. And they are using poor fielding and throwing mechanics. They just bend over and let the ball roll into their gloves because the first baseman just rolls the balls to them.

The outfielders only get in one or two throws because of overthrows and missed balls and the fact they walked to their outfield positions and the fact that all three are playing catch together.

The catcher, after finally getting his gear on walks up to the plate, takes one pitch and the umpire suddenly calls "Balls in." The catcher throws down to second and the ball sails into the outfield where the center fielder who is not paying attention lets it get by him. The umpire says, "Play". Are your players really ready to **play**?

A team can get in important and needed game-type repetitions if they will take this time in the game seriously and if they have a plan.

Here are some ways they can do it better and improve their pre-inning infield.

- All players should put their gloves in the same place in the dugout, every time. (the reason why in the next tip)
- When a player is left stranded on base his nearest position teammate should "pick him up". This means he should bring his teammate's glove and/or cap with him onto the field so there will be no time wasted. How does he know where that glove is? Because everybody leaves their gloves in the same place in the dugout. (The nearest base coach can bring his batting helmet back to the dugout.)
- Everybody runs onto the field. Coaches have to reinforce this because the tendency in the late innings or when a team is behind in the score is to drag a little bit. When do you most need your players to be alert and lively and ready? In the late innings. Time them going on and off the field. Give them a 15-20 second limit to be in the dugout or be on the field, depending on whether you are batting or in the field.

They have been sitting in the dugout so it is necessary for them to get the blood flowing. Jogging onto the field accomplishes that. It also looks like they came to play. They don't have to sprint to their positions. A brisk jog is fine.

- You must have a bullpen catcher. Let me say that again. You must have a bullpen catcher. When your starting catcher is left on the bases at the end of an inning your bullpen catcher must go to the plate to warm up your pitcher.

If you have 12 players on your team then this is a reserve player. He should have his mask and glove ready so he can jog to the plate when all the other players take their positions.

This will get your pitcher the 5 pitches he is allowed between innings, ones he needs. Some might say "No body else on this team can catch our pitcher." But, this won't be the case if you are

working with both your catchers. Plus you provide your reserves and younger players something to do every inning? You are coaching all 12 players, after all.

- A reserve player goes to the dugout-side outfield foul line and plays catch with that outfielder. This gives all outfielders more throws because the centre fielder and off outfielder can warm up, just the two of them. If you are in the third base dugout, this player would play catch with the left fielder, while the centre and right fielders played catch together.

It is important for them to work on throwing accuracy. They are not doing this so they can just toss the ball around. It should be done with a purpose.

- The other reserve player picks up all bats, helmets and equipment and puts it in its proper place.
- The infielders assume their deepest positions to take ground balls from the first baseman. The second baseman is in front of the outfield edge of the grass behind the bag, the short stop is on the outfield edge of the grass in the hole and the third baseman is as deep as he can get on the outfield edge of the grass.

The toughest play they will have to make may be the farthest so why not have them work on that play in between innings? What does it accomplish to toss balls twenty feet?

The first baseman should throw routine ground balls briskly to them and they should use good fielding mechanics and make accurate sharp throws back to him. They should jog back to their positions and await the next throw. All three infielders should make at least one backhand play every inning. The ball doesn't have to be thrown perfectly to their backhand side; they can just wait on the ball and get into a backhand position.

Every pre-inning infield should be taken seriously. It is very common to see infielders clowning around and throwing balls all over the place. Teach them how to do it correctly. Players left to their own devices will invariably do it wrong or with poor technique. They have to be taught and then receive reinforcement.

- The pitcher gets about 5 pitches during his warm-up. He should throw all his pitches, 4-seam, 2-seam fastballs and change up. If he has a breaking pitch he should throw at least one. He should throw the last two pitches from the stretch.
- A coach should pay close attention to his players during the time before every defensive half inning. He should be alert for lack of hustle and poor fielding technique. It's another one of those "Little Things that make a team better."

Use verbal reinforcement at the end of every offensive half inning. You can make up your own phrase, but some examples are: "Bullpen catcher get out there", "Mike, pick up Tommy", "First baseman do you have a ball?" (make sure they get one when they come into the dugout after getting the third out so they are ready to start the inning in the field and not spend time looking for a ball), "Stephen throw them all" (reminding the pitcher to warm up using all his pitches), "Good throws guys", "Hustle, Chad." Poor pre-inning infield is as common as poor youth batting practice. Do your team a favor and get them ready to play. You will see a difference.

PERFORMANCE ANXIETY IN SPORTS

By Dr. Keith Wilson is a performance consultant and psychotherapist in El Paso, Texas

It might seem a little odd to think about a ten year old baseball player with performance anxiety. We usually reserve that term for adult players who choke under pressure. However, odds are that, as a parent, you have seen some of the following symptoms of performance anxiety in your young athlete or one that you know:

Symptoms of Performance Anxiety

- Can't go to sleep the night before a game
- Decides that they would rather go buy an iguana that go to the game that day
- Cries after striking out
- Does not want to have pop flies hit to him.
- Likes to swing a bat in the on deck circle but never really looks comfortable at the plate

Performance Anxiety Impedes Sports Development

These are just a few of the things that parents may notice as they watch their children develop in youth baseball or softball. Many of the events that make us uncomfortable as parents are developmental skill issues that the coach should be addressing. Any time a young player starts to have success, they build confidence. Once they build confidence in their ability in practice, then they are more likely to want to perform their new skills during an actual game. Children where I live are under more pressure today than ever to perform to adults' expectations. Children where I live develop anxiety disorders as they deal with the pressure of standardized tests that will determine if they get to move on to the 4th grade. It is no surprise, then, to also see this anxiety on the field. Sometimes we will tell our young player to relax while they are out there. But if we do not teach them to "relax under pressure," then telling them to relax only increases the pressure and anxiety they feel.

Relaxation Skills You Can Teach Your Child

There are several different relaxation skills that a parent can teach their young player. The easiest is breathing. That sounds weird since we all are breathing. But when we help players learn how to exhale effectively, their enjoyment of the game can improve.

Here are the steps that I advise parents teach young players about "Performance Exhaling":

- Teach them to experience the relaxation response that comes with intentional exhaling. Do this in the comfort of your home. Practice every day so that it becomes natural.
- Help the player to recognize when to do a "Performance Exhale" in the game. Examples would include:
 - As part of the settling into the batter's box routine before each pitch
 - As a pitcher, just before they begin their wind up However, some of these sport development issues concern anxiety. Children in general
 - As a field player, as the pitcher starts their windup

Benefits of Performance Exhaling

Your young player will start to build and experience confidence as they relax under pressure.

- They will be more focused for each play in the game.
- They will probably improve their skill level.
- Most importantly, they will enjoy the game more.

Performance anxiety is not just for adults. As we teach our children how to "relax under pressure" they can use these skills to improve their performance and enjoyment in both sports and at school.

SEVEN MISTAKES MADE BY YOUTH PITCHERS

and How To Correct Them

Most articles and books written on the mechanics of pitching usually stress the importance of pitching correctly but forget to focus on the things youth pitchers do incorrectly and how to fix them. Therefore, we are going to concentrate on the seven most common things youth pitchers do incorrectly and how to create new habits to do away with these mistakes.

The Seven Mistakes Made by Young Pitchers Are:

- Grip
- Short Arming
- Arm Angle
- Rushing
- Stepping Straight
- Finishing Correctly
- Rhythm



GRIP

Youth pitchers usually grip the ball too hard and some can't control the ball because their hand is too small, so they use three or four fingers. To make things easier, players, no matter what age they are, should grip the ball easily with a gap between the ball and the palm of their hand. That way their wrist is free and easy and loose. Young pitchers with small hands can grip the ball with three fingers as long as they adhere to the above grip. Older pitchers with bigger hands should start to grip the ball with 2 fingers.

SHORT ARMING

A lot of young pitchers do not reach all the way back behind them with their arm extended before they throw the ball. This is called short-arming and a lot of youth pitchers do this which leads to sore arms, bad mechanics and the inability to get a stronger arm. Try to tell players to reach back and touch second base or try and touch the centerfield fence when they are on the mound. This gets them to think about extension. Most likely, a youth pitcher who is short-arming, is also trying to aim the ball rather than cutting loose and throwing it. A lot of youth pitchers never realize how hard they can actually throw the ball because they short-arm. By just playing catch and learning to reach back and then doorway the ball (see below), you'll eliminate short-arming. If you learn to cut loose and throw, muscle memory will take care of the accuracy.

ARM ANGLE

If you tell a youth pitcher to get his arm up, he probably does not know what you mean. Kids work better with visualization in relation to throwing the ball. He can have his arm up too high (12 o'clock) or have it next to his ear (stemming from short-arming). Instead, tell players to think of a doorway in their house. Have them draw the doorway over their heads with their arms. At the upper right and left have them stop. This is about 2 o'clock. This is also great arm angle. The ball is away from their head and the elbow is above the shoulder. This is the "doorway method". Kids

can visualize and do it! And most importantly--- they understand what you're talking about. Put this together with eliminating short-arming and you'll get decent arm action.

RUSHING

If you rush on the mound you'll end up short-arming the ball, because your arm is trying to catch up with your body. Rushing means going too fast through the power position. There is only one way to stop this. Again, using visualization, a pitcher should not go forward until their front leg (non-pivot/glove side leg) gets to its highest point in the power position. Use this as a guide and you'll never have a problem. Another key factor in this important part of the delivery is to make sure before they go forward that their hands are breaking (separating) so that they can throw the ball. Just because they did not go forward before your front leg got to its highest point, does not mean they will not be short-arming. Do not pull the hands apart. They should be dropping down freely just as if you were playing catch. Remember: The hands break or begin to move just before the body goes forward.

STEPPING STRAIGHT

When stepping to the plate a lot of young pitchers open up and step incorrectly. Opening up means that the front side of the body (the glove side), begins to rotate the chest (open) before the pitching arm reaches the power position. From the pivot foot (the foot on the pitching rubber) in the power position, draw a straight line from the toe toward the plate. The pitcher's non-pivot foot (stride foot) should land on that line. If he opens up way too much it will be difficult to maintain proper arm angle and balance. This is a very common problem in young pitchers. Watch this point carefully, because sometimes this can affect everything else.

FINISHING CORRECTLY

Youth pitchers should finish each pitch the same way all the time so they can develop a consistent release point. You can use the term "finishing square", a term they can visualize. "Follow Through" is a general statement and means different things to different kids. Finishing square means that the landing foot and pivot foot (after it comes around) finish spread apart and even with one another, leaving the pitcher facing the plate. It also puts them in a good position to field the ball. Their arm should finish outside the knee of their front leg (non-pivot). They should have a good wrist snap and continued arm speed to the end of your delivery.

RHYTHM

Going too fast means they will probably rush. Going too slowly means they will most likely aim the ball or look like a robot. Pitching is all TIMING and BALANCE! Your rhythm will be determined by this. Rhythm is different for everyone. However, remember one important factor---your arm should be moving the fastest, not your body. The more arm speed you generate, the faster the ball goes. Faster body speed doesn't mean the ball will go faster.

If these seven mistakes can be minimized or eliminated altogether, youth pitchers will begin to be successful on the mound and feel good about themselves, leading to- *more strikes!*

“WINNERS CIRCLE”



Every game fills players with emotion that needs to be addressed before players disperse. Because of this, coaches should never leave their players hanging after a game. Even if you only have time for a 3-minute meeting, make sure you have a post-game conversation.

The "Winners' Circle" is a high-energy way to bring closure to a game and ensure that players' Emotional Tanks are filled. Players stand or sit in a circle, often linking shoulders. The floor is open to anyone, including the coach, who wants to comment on good plays or good efforts made by their teammates.

Each time a player finishes recognizing a teammate, the entire circle moves to give that player a high five, or, if sitting, a round of applause. It's important that the coach be ready to recognize anyone who may get left out. This can be a tremendously moving experience that can help make a group of players a true team. It can be especially powerful after a defeat. Even in a losing effort, your players did many positive things that typically do not get acknowledged in a win-at-all-cost culture.

Whether your players are eight or 18, they will quickly learn to look forward to this post-game ritual.

BASEBALL SKILL PROGRESSION CHART

This skills chart should serve as reference for coaches as they determine what skills to teach their players. Teaching skills beyond the capabilities of the player can often cause problems.

Scale: I = Introduce; M = Maintain

SKILLS	AGE					
		9 & under	10 & 11	12 & 13	14 & 15	16 - 18
Throwing						
Grip		I	I/M	M	M	
Arm action		I	I/M	M	M	M
Body action			I/M	M	M	M
Crow hop			I/M	M	M	M
Starter Step		I	I/M	M	M	
Follow through		I	I/M	M	M	
Arm back		I	I/M	M	M	
Warm up		I	I/M	M	M	M
Receiving						
Two hands		I	M	M	M	M
Position of body			M	M	M	M
Position of glove		I	M			
Quickness of feet			I	M	M	M
Cushion ball		I	M			
Prepare to throw		I	M	M	M	
Hitting	7 & Under	8 & 9	10 & 11	12 & 13	14 & 15	16 - 18
Bat selection	I	M	M			
Grip	I	M	M	M		
Stance	I	M	M			
Swing and stride	I	M	M			
Ready position	I	M	M	M		
Strike zone		I	M	M		
Sacrifice bunt				I	M	M
Push bunt					I	M
Drag bunt					I	M
Squeeze bunt					I	M
Free swinging	I	M				
Follow through	I	M	M	M		
Faults and corrections				I	M	M
Base running	7 & Under	8 & 9	10 & 11	12 & 13	14 & 15	16 - 18
Speed and agility	I	M	M	M	M	
General body movements	I	M	M			
Running form			I	M	M	M
Running the right direction	I	I/M				
Home to first	I	M	M	M		
Turn at first	I	M	M	M		
Bent leg slide	I	M	M	M		
Hook slide			I	M	M	M

Base running - continued	7 & Under	8 & 9	10 & 11	12 & 13	14 & 15	16 - 18
Pop up slide				I	M	M
Head first slide				I	M	M
Base stealing				I	M	M
Lead off				I	M	M
Picking up signals				I	M	M
Rounding bases	I	I/M	M			
Returning to first	I	I/M	M	M		
Leading off second				I	M	M
Leading off third				I	M	M
Pitching	7 & Under	8 & 9	10 & 11	12 & 13	14 & 15	16 - 18
Set position			I	M	M	
Stride			I	M	M	M
Delivery			I	M	M	M
Follow through			I	M	M	M
Arm action			I	M	M	M
Grips			I	M	M	M
Fastball			I	M	M	M
Wind up				I	M	
Pivot				I	M	
Curveball					I	M
Change up				I	M	M
Balance			I	M	M	M
Warm up			I	M	M	M
Fielding position			I	M	M	M
Covering first base			I	M	M	M
Balks & Pick-off moves				I	M	M
Catching	7 & Under	8 & 9	10 & 11	12 & 13	14 & 15	16 - 18
Receiving the ball (hands)		I	M	M	M	
Catching Squat and Crouch		I	M	M	M	
Blocking low pitches				I	M	M
Throwing		I	M	M	M	M
Fielding pop ups			I	M	M	
Fielding bunts				I	M	M
Tagging runners			I	M	M	M
Calling pitches				I	M	M
Framing				I	M	M
Infielding	7 & Under	8 & 9	10 & 11	12 & 13	14 & 15	16 - 18
Fielding stances	I	I/M	M	M	M	M
Fielding ground balls directly at	I	I/M	M	M	M	M
Fielding groundballs to left & right			I	M	M	M
Fielding ground balls-backhand				I	M	M
Basic fielding positions (depths)				I	M	M
Cross over step			I	M	M	M
First base position & footwork		I	M	M	M	
Holding runners on				I	M	M
Receiving throws	I	M	M	M		
Double Play - Second base				I	M	M

Infielding (continued)	7 & Under	8 & 9	10 & 11	12 & 13	14 & 15	16 - 18
Double Play - Shortstop				I	M	M
Double Play Feeds – SS / 2 nd				I	M	M
Third base - Slow roller				I	M	M
Fielding pop ups	I	M	M			
Fielding and throwing	I	M	M	M		
Tagging the runner		I	M	M	M	M
Outfielding	7 & Under	8 & 9	10 & 11	12 & 13	14 & 15	16 - 18
Stance	I	M	M	M	M	
Line drives			I	M	M	M
Fly balls	I	M	M	M	M	
Fielding ground balls directly at	I	M	M	M	M	M
Fielding ground balls to left/right			I	M	M	M
Playing balls in the sun					I	M
Going back for fly balls			I	M	M	M
Crow hop			I	M	M	M
Throwing	I	M	M	M	M	M
Playing the fence					I	M
Communication	I	M	M	M	M	M
Catching with two hands	I	M	M	M	M	
Cross-over step			I	M	M	M
Physical Preparation	7 & Under	8 & 9	10 & 11	12 & 13	14 & 15	16 - 18
Aerobic & Anaerobic				I	M	M
Speed			I	M	M	M
Strength & Power				I	M	M
Flexibility		I/M	I/M	M	M	M
Nutrition			I	M	M	M
Team Skills	7 & Under	8 & 9	10 & 11	12 & 13	14 & 15	16 - 18
Throwing ahead of runner	I	I/M	M			
Looking where to make the out		I	I/M			
Communicating ahead of play			I	I/M		
Communicating during play			I	I/M		
Double Plays			I	I/M	M	M
Decoys					I	M
Relays			I	I/M	M	M
Double Cuts				I	M	M
Fake bunt double steal					I	M
Hit and run / Run and hit				I	M	M
Double steal			I	I/M	M	M
Squeeze play				I	M	M
Sacrifice bunts			I	M	M	M
Mental Skills	7 & Under	8 & 9	10 & 11	12 & 13	14 & 15	16 & 18
Positive self talk			I	I/M	M	M
Visualization				I	M	M
Concentration				I	M	M
Energization & Relaxation				I	M	M
Knowing situation				I	M	M
What to do next		I	I/M	I/M	M	M

DRILLS

The following pages have drills divided into positions and skills:

- Throwing
- Throwing Techniques
- Infielding – ground balls
- Infielding – pop flies
- Outfielding
- Batting
- Team Defence
- Pitching Mechanics
- Pitcher Shadow/Mirror
- Pitcher Fielding
- Catching
- Baserunning
- Conditioning

Following the drills pages are a sample practice plan and a blank practice form. Make copies of the blank form and use the drills in the booklet and to create your own practice plans for the season.



THROWING DRILLS

Throwing drills (remember the correct grip – with four seams across the “horseshoe”, thumb underneath)

1. Wrist Snap

On knees, facing partner, throwing arm held in front, bent at 45 degree angle so that the elbow is as high as the shoulder and the finger point to the sky, ball facing partner, elbow in glove, supporting the arm. With proper grip, **snap** the wrist and forearm to propel ball to partner. Working on the last part of the throw, the wrist snap imparts velocity, aids in accuracy and distance.



2. Back knee: goal-post

Kneel on throwing side knee, glove side hip and shoulder pointing to partner, lead leg extended at slight angle to right of partner to allow hip/shoulder turn. Ball is held in proper grip, arm facing out to second base, elbow bent at 45 degree angle and at shoulder height, ball pointing to second base (wave "good-bye"). Glove side elbow is up at shoulder height, arm bent at 45 degrees, glove at comfortable position. Rotate forward, pulling down with front elbow and throwing ball with correct arm action, reaching out to target. **Emphasize follow through.** (knee to chest).



3. Back knee: full arm

Same position as above, this time with ball in glove at waist (belly button). Break hands thumbs down, elbows up. Throwing arm goes down, out, and back. Continue up through goal-post position and throw ball. Do not stop at goal-post position, but make it one continuous smooth motion. Again emphasize the follow through.

4. Rock and fire: goal-post

Stand up, feet almost twice shoulder width apart (simulating the stride when throwing), glove side hip and shoulder facing partner. Arms should be in the previously described goal-post position. Transfer the weight to the back leg by slightly bending the back knee. Do not lean back, but keep trunk upright. Shift weight forward and rotate trunk to throw ball. Follow through is key. Back foot should roll over so that the heel points upward.



5. Rock and fire: full arm

Stand as above, and use the full arm action described in step number 3.

6. Step and throw

Regular catch and throw: receiving the ball with two hands while stepping with the glove side foot to the ball, then making a short step (starter step) with the back foot by turning the pivot foot (photo right) and rotating trunk before throwing.



Starter step

THROWING TECHNIQUE DRILLS

Long Toss (Increase throwing strength & accuracy)

Probably the most important pre-season ritual is long-toss. Start out with basic fundamentals on throwing. Begin at about 40 feet in week one and then increase 10 to 15 feet every week until your first game. You will usually end up at about 250 feet or so. Do long-toss for 10 minutes everyday.

4 Corner Catch

- 4 players stand 90 feet apart in a square formation.
- Round I- catch ball, get in slot position, crossover and throw. Round II- catch, exchange, and throw.
- Round III- change direction without reverse pivot.
- Round IV- reverse pivot throws
- Round V- arm fake and reverse pivot. Catch and arm fake back to the player that threw you the ball then reverse pivot and throw to the next player.

Relay Race (Improve throwing mechanics)

Divide your team into two lines, around 8ft. apart.

X X X X X X
X X X X X X

Give the first player in each line a baseball and have a relay race with the baseball of three or more rounds. When the ball gets to the end of the line, and back to the player at the beginning, it is considered one lap. Make sure each player is turning on the glove hand as they turn to throw. If a player in the line misses the ball, that player must retrieve the ball and throw to the next player in-line. The team that completes the amount of laps set, is the winner.



Machine Gun Throw (To develop quick hands & feet)

Put 7 players in a straight line approximately 3 to 4 feet apart with the player at the far right holding a baseball. Put 1 player facing the line of 7 approximately 15 feet away from the center player in the line of 7. The player facing the line of 7 also has a baseball.

X8 X7 X6 X5 X4 X3 X2
X1

Coach will say, " go." Player 1 throws his ball to player 3. At the same time player 2 throws his ball to player 1. As soon as player 3 catches the ball he throws it back to player 1. As soon as player 1 catches the ball from player 2 he throws it to player 4, and so on down the line. Player 1 works his way down the line to player 8, and then back up the line to player 2. At this point player 1 flips his ball to player 3, player 2 replaces player 1 (player 1 then goes to the end of the line) and everyone rotates up one spot and the drill starts over again.

X1 X8 X7 X6 X5 X4 X3
X2

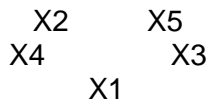
This drill forces the players to catch the ball with two hands. If he catches it with one hand he can't get rid of it in time before the next ball is coming at him. It also teaches our players the importance of

THROWING TECHNIQUE DRILLS (cont)

stepping at your target because you have to shift your feet in a different direction before throwing to the next person in line. A player who is lax or sloppy with his glove or feet is easily spotted in this drill.

5 Star Throwing Drill (Develop Throwing Skills)

Place players in five separate groups that form an upside down pentagon.



X1 has the baseball, throws it to X2 and follows his throw. X2 throws the ball to X3 and follows his throw. X3 throws the ball to X4 and follows his throw. X4 throws the ball to X5 and follows his throw. X5 throws the ball to X1 line and follows his throw. This drill can be run inside or out and at any distance. Shorten the distance to work on quick hands, and lengthen the distance to provide long throwing for your players. This drill forces the players to follow their throw. By doing this you will find the players are more likely to make a correct throwing motion and step directly at their target. Sometimes, drills which require a player to return to the end of their line after making a throw, have a tendency to make the player hurry to go in an opposite direction of their throw, which can interfere with extension and follow through. You can shorten the throwing by having the players about 10 feet apart. You can extend it as far as 200 feet outside. This also serves as a good conditioner. One important detail about the drill, after a player throws the ball to another, he should follow his throw to the outside to avoid getting hit by the next thrown ball.

Team Long Catch Drill:

There will be 2 throwing circuits going at one time. One circuit will consist of 1/2 of the OF's, C's, 2B's, and 1/2 of the 1B's. The second circuit will consist of 1/2 of the OF's, 3B's and SS's, and 1/2 of the 1B's. The balls will start from the OF's.

1/2 of the OF's will be in LC, they will throw to the plate, one C receives throw, steps out in front of plate and, from one knee, throws to another C who is positioned 5 ft. behind the plate. This C catches and throws to 2b. One 2B receives throw and rolls ball to another 2B behind 2b who fields the ground ball and throws to a 1B 20 ft. beyond 1b. This 1B throws back to the OF in LC and the circuit repeats. OF's rotate lines after each throw, SS and 3B rotate, 2B's rotate, 1B's rotate, and C's rotate after each throw.

1/2 of the OF's will be in RF, they will throw to 3b. 3B's and SS's will receive throw and roll ball in the deep hole to the other 3B or SS who will field the ball and throw to 1B at 1b. 1B will receive throw and throw to OF in RF and the circuit repeats. OF's rotate lines, 3B's and SS's rotate, and 1B's rotate.



INFIELD DRILLS

Find the Grip Drill

This drill teaches the players to find the proper grip on the ball. Each player has a ball. They start by throwing the ball up in the air and catching it. The players reach in their glove and find the proper grip. The coach should walk around and ask the players to show the proper grip. If they are using the wrong grip, show them the correct grip. The grip should be the same every time. The index and middle fingers should be over the “C” or the wide part of the baseball seams. This is called a four-seam grip.

Ball in Glove Pocket Drill (to practice transfer of ball from glove to throwing arm)

Start with ball in pocket of glove left of center and out in front of body (like the ball has just been fielded). From this position make exchange in front of body while crossing over with feet (right over left for right hand thrower) and throwing to base.

Alligator Drill

This drill is used to show the player how to field using two hands. Line the players up in a half circle approximately 3 ft. away from each other. Players should be in fielding positions ready to field the ball. The coach rolls the ball to the players and they field it using two hands (players’ hands should be in the shape of an alligator’s mouth). The coach should roll the ball in sequence until it appears to be getting easier for the players, then start mixing it up. Roll the ball to any of the players at any time.



Number Ball Drill

This drill is used to increase the player’s ability to watch the ball all the way into their glove. It can be used for both infield and outfield. You will need to write numbers large enough to be seen on two sides of the baseballs. With your group, place them in the infield (short stop or 2nd base). The coach hits ground balls and fly balls to the group one player at a time. The player should call out the number of the ball as soon as possible, field the ball and return the ball to the coach. You can also make this a competition by having two groups. The group with the fewest errors in calling out the correct number win. Coach should start slowly and then increase the speed and angle of the balls hit, and make sure that the players are using proper fielding mechanics, keeping their head on the ball. This drill can also be used with colored dots or colored balls.

Glove only Ground balls

With throwing hand behind back, field ground balls. Once ball is stopped, leave glove in front of body and reach to it with throwing hand and make exchange in front of body. During exchange go right over left with feet pointing right toe toward the base you are throwing to.

20/20/20 Drill

With partner 45 feet away, roll each other 20 routine balls to the left, 20 routine balls to the right, and 20 backhand balls. (Can also be done without gloves)

Drop Step Ground Ball Drill

Ground balls are rolled in the holes to the right and left of the fielder. The fielder should begin his route to the ball with a drop step to the side the ball is hit. This is for hard hit balls to the left and right

INFIELD DRILLS (cont.)

Dead Ball Drill

Place a ball at various places around fielder so he can approach, pickup, and make a throw to a base on a ball that is stationary, such as is the case in a softly hit ball or a bobbled play. You can also have the fielders start with their back to the ball.

Slow Roller Drill

Hit or roll slow roller ground balls to fielder. Make sure his first move is a step to the outside of the line of the ball to cut down the angle of the play. You can start the fielder with his back to the play and tell him to turn at contact. Now you can alternate routine grounders with slow rollers to help in his reaction to either play.

Goalie drill

Set up 2 orange cones about 15 ft apart. Player stays between the cones and stops balls that are rolled at him. As soon as he touches one ball, another is rolled. Make the player go side-to-side. Players should not try to catch ball, simply knock it away.



Infield Drill (Staying down on ball & correct throwing when they return ball)

Line up half of the team behind second base and the other half behind shortstop. Hit them easy ground balls and they concentrate on fielding position (staying down on the ball) and also correct throwing when they return the ball. After each player fields his turn, he returns to the end of the line. Keep in mind that this drill keeps them moving quite a bit. Have the players switch lines after about 5-7 minutes. When you sense them getting tired, turn the drill into a competition. For example: If your line goes without an error then your line can take a break. One error and the whole line go again.

Backhand Drill

This drill is designed to train the fielder to get into the proper position to field a backhand properly. Line up your players at short stop. The coach rolls the ball to the backhand side of player (rolling the ball further and further away as the players get better). The coach can eventually use a bat as the players get better. Players field the ball using the backhand technique. The coach should roll the ball slowly at first emphasizing technique and then increase the speed as the players get better. You should look for the cross-over step and make sure that the left leg (for right handed player) is in front of the right leg and is bent at a 90 degrees when they field the ball. The player's glove should be palm side down and low to the ground. The coach should mix up the direction of the ball occasionally so the players do not cheat.

Soft Hands

The is one that helps infielders to develop "soft" hands and release the ball quickly and one that helps with lateral movement and fielding: Have four infielders form a square with about 10 ft. between them. Then, without gloves they flip the ball around counter-clockwise, then shift direction and gradually increase the distance. In the other one divide the infielders into pairs and have them face their partner at a distance of about 10 to 15ft then, while moving sideways they roll the ball to each other a couple of times before shifting direction. It's important in this drill that the fielders stay low and get rid of the ball quickly.

INFIELD DRILLS (cont.)

Soft Hands 2

Take a Ping-Pong paddle and cut the handle off and staple a batting glove to the back. The player puts his glove hand in the glove and fields ground balls from a fungo. The drill emphasizes the use of the top hand, to ensure the ball doesn't become loose and so that the throwing hand is there to throw or flip the ball.

4 Corner Ground Ball Drill

4 infielders get 90 feet apart in a square formation. One begins the drill by rolling a ground ball to the fielder to his left. He fields the ball and makes a throw diagonally across the square to another fielder who catches the ball makes a tag play and rolls the ball to the fielder to his left and so on.

Crossover Step Ground Ball Drill

Ground balls are rolled to the right and left of the fielder but not past the fielder. For these balls hit in front of him, his first step should be a crossover step with the foot opposite the side the ball is hit.

Dive Progression Drills (do first two with ball already in glove, remember go to right and left.)

- From layout position on ground with ball in pocket, work on getting to feet under control and setting feet to throw.
- From knees break fall, get up and throw
- From knees add a soft rolled ball, player then gets up and throws.
- From feet with knees bent well toss balls low and to the sides in grass area.



Relay Drill

Players line up 3 to a line 90+ feet apart. One ball begins at the end player and is thrown to the middleman who relays the ball to the other end man. When middleman has made 5 relays a new man goes to the middle.

Short Hop Drill

Players partner up facing each other in fielding position and throw each other short hop balls from 15 feet apart. Can back up to 30 feet.

Cover Drill

All infielders line up at the second base and shortstop positions. A player in front of the base rolls the ball to either 2B or SS. who in turn throws to the opposite player covering the bag, then turns double-play pivot.

Rundowns

Players line up in groups of three, spread evenly apart. The player in the middle, is the baserunner. One player holds the ball begins running towards the baserunner simulating a rundown situation. We make one throw and a tag. Players rotate positions.

INFIELD DRILLS (cont.)

King of the Diamond" –Ground Ball Competition

Setting up for "King of the Diamond". Coach at home plate - ready to throw ground balls. Second coach at first base with empty bucket. Players line up, one behind the other, at the regular second base fielding position. The player at the front of the line moves gets ready to take turn fielding ground ball.

ROUND #1 - Roll a "routine" ground ball to each player lined up at second base fielding position. If the player fields the ball cleanly and makes an accurate throw to the first baseman – he gets to move to the line at the shortstop position. If a player fumbles the ground ball or makes a bad throw to first – he does not advance to shortstop but instead moves to the back of the line at second base position. ROUND #1 ends when you have given each player a chance to field one ground ball.

ROUND #2 - Start ROUND #2 by rolling a routine ground ball to each of the players still in the second base fielding line. Again, if the players make a good play they move up to shortstop and if they make an error they stay at second base. Complete ROUND #2 by rolling a little more challenging ground ball to each player in the shortstop line. If a player in the shortstop line makes a nice play and an accurate throw to first base he gets to move over and line up at the third base fielding position. If a player in the shortstop line fumbles the ground ball or makes a bad throw to first base he needs to move back down to the line at the second base fielding position. Round #2 ends when each player in the group has had the chance to field his second ground ball of the competition.

ROUND #3 - Start ROUND #3 by rolling a routine ground ball to each of the players in the second base line. Again, if they make a good play they move up to shortstop, if they make an error they stay at second base. Then roll a medium little more challenging ground ball to each player in the shortstop line. If a player in the shortstop line makes a nice play and an accurate throw to first base he gets to move up to the third base line and if he makes a fielding or throwing error he moves back to second. Finally, turn and face the players in the "KING OF THE DIAMOND" line at third base and throw a more challenging ground ball to each of them. (a faster ground ball to make them work to their



backhand or forehand side.) Now, if a player at third base position makes a good fielding play and an accurate throw across the diamond to first base he gets to stay in the "KING OF THE DIAMOND" line. If a player in the third baseline makes an error fielding or throwing he moves down to the shortstop line. Round #3 ends when each player has had the chance to field his third ground ball, so if you have six players in the group, the round would include six ground balls, one to each player.

Continue with 10-15 more rounds so each player gets lots of chances to move up. The "King of the Diamond" champion is the player that makes the most successful plays at third base.

INFIELD POP FLY DRILLS

Partner pop-ups

Players toss pop up balls to each other at their positions. The thrower stands on the infield grass area and varies pop-ups left, right, and straight over fielder's head. Fielders should work on a good initial drop step to side of ball and then move to where the ball will land and adjust to get behind the ball. Corner infielders should work on balls in foul territory around fence and dugout area with thrower telling him where the fence is.

Turn and Go's (Blind pop-ups)

Partner pop-ups with fielder starting with his back to the ball and thrower calling "turn" when the ball leaves his hand. This drill is a confidence builder. It teaches players that they can get to a ball much quicker than they think they can.

3 Ball Tracking

Partner pop-ups with the thrower tossing three balls (one after the other) to his fielder to his left, right, and straight away. As the first ball comes half way down the next ball is tossed and so on. The distances right and left should be reasonable but challenging to allow the fielder get under each ball.

Call the ball (communication drill)

Position fielders in pairs 75-100 feet apart. Set up fielding pairs in tandem...

- Infielder with an outfielder
- Third with Left
- Short with Center,
- Second with an extra outfielder
- First base with Right Field.

Before beginning, coaches should make one thing clear - what to call. Recommended call these days is not "got it" which might mean "you got it" or "I got it" or "who's got it?". Instead, many coaches ask their players to call "mine - mine - mine!" It's more obvious and more confident, shorter and can be said quicker. The coach tosses the ball up so it will come down midway between the two fielders - one charging in, one turning and sprinting out. The judgment to call it out must be made with confidence and certainty, at which point the other fielder MUST tail away into a back-up position - eyes no longer on the ball, concentrating instead on staying about 15' feet from the caller, waiting for the clean catch or dropped ball.

Pop-up reaction

Toss or hit pop-ups into the air, but to make it challenging, ask the fielders stare down at their shoes. Then tell them when it's OK to look up. At the call, they have to spot the ball and make the catch. Remember, none of them know who the ball is going to. You can also start the infielders down on one knee and close their eyes before asking them to react to the pop-ups.



OUTFIELD DRILLS

Drop Step Drill

Partner tosses fly balls to right and left of fielder. Fielder takes initial drop step to side of which the ball is thrown and continues to catch the ball. 20 repetitions per side.

Opposite Shoulder Drill

Fielder drop steps to one side and begins pursuit to that side. Partner tosses fly to opposite side forcing the fielder to turn away from the ball and recover to catch the ball without losing ground or angle on the ball. Fielder must not turn until he sees that the ball is to his opposite shoulder.

Reverse Pivot Drill

Partner stands 90 ft. from fielder and rolls ground balls to the glove side of fielder so that the fielder has to play the ball at arms reach. Fielder fields ball at extension and proceeds to reverse pivot and throw the ball back to partner. From the same position that the fielder completes the first play, he begins the next so the drill sends him in a circle around his partner. Two times around the circle and partners switch.

Ball Wall Ball Drill

Partners throw fly balls close to the fence so that the fielder has to read and pursue ball, glance to find the wall, and pick up the ball again to make the catch.

Volleyball (To emphasize the need to communicate in the outfield)

Description: Create two teams. Use the foul fence or home run fence as the "net". Players throw pop-ups back and forth over the net. A team scores a point if the ball lands on the ground on the opposite side. Encourage your players to call out for the ball.

Communication Drill

Two groups of outfielders position themselves gap width apart and receive fly balls hit between them by a fungo hitter. A call must be made for the ball by the time it begins to drop and a trail man must be in position to backup play and call out directions for the throw.

Three Ball Tracking Drill

Partners toss fly balls to each other three in a row beginning the next once the first has come half way down. The fielder must catch one and quickly get set up for the next one and so on. The fly's should be thrown no more than 5 or 6 steps in any direction of the fielder.

Back To The Ball Drill

Fielder begins with his back to the ball. Upon a "turn" command by the partner once he releases the ball, the fielder must see the ball quickly and get into position and make the play. The partner mixes up ground balls and fly balls.

Dead Ball Pickups

5 balls for each fielder are placed at random on the warning track. From a position 60 ft in on the grass from the warning track, the fielder one at a time go get a ball and throw it back to the next one in line then he goes and so on. It is important to field the ball with the bare hand and under control then get the feet set to make a quick accurate throw.



BATTING DRILLS

Birdie Toss (Hand / Eye Coordination)

Have a coach stand 10-15 feet from the batter and throw the badminton birdies into the strike zone. This drill enables batters to take LOTS of swings in a relatively short period of time. It also allows the coach to place the "pitch" exactly where he wants it, thus enabling the batter to work on weak areas of their swing.

Face the Fence (Develop Bat Speed)

The player stands with a bat facing a fence. He should then take the bat and put the end against the fence lightly. The end of the handle should make slight contact with the player's mid-section. He can now take his normal batting stance at that distance from the fence and take about ten or fifteen swings. If the bat is making more than light contact with the fence, the batter is not bringing his hands through first, which is what he should be doing. To get a player to bring his hands first, have him take his normal step as if to swing, only have him "throw" the end of the handle towards the ball. If he continues to do this, it will increase his bat speed and he will probably hit the ball harder.

Hip Turner Drill (Develop quicker hips and the relationship of hip speed to entire swing)

Place a bat behind the waist, horizontal to the ground, and use a glove as home plate. While holding the ends of the bat in the hands, assume a normal batting stance and watch an imaginary pitch being delivered. Execute a stride and quick turn using the bat to help turn the hips faster. Finish in the proper contact point position. Can also use this with whiffle ball soft toss to show how hips generate power.



Hitting Motion (Teach correct hitting mechanics & develop quick hands)

- 1) Top hand should hold bottom thumb to simulate holding a bat. Top hand should also hold a ball. Throw the ball into a net for all direction of hits (pull, middle, opposite field). The throw causes arms to extend and rolls wrist to attain a down and in or out swing.
- 2) The "Slap" technique involves two players. Have one player kneel in front of batter with a hand outstretched in the strike zone. The batter then swings at the outstretched hand and slaps it with both hands. This keeps the front shoulder in.
- 3) For a player that sweeps the bat or "chicken wings" by lifting the front elbow, stick a batting glove under the front armpit to ensure that the swing stays closed and the batter doesn't fly open.
- 4) Use two "T's". Place a ball on the front "T" about two inches lower than back "T". Swing to hit ball on front "T".

(For these next drills make sure that the batter is in his full stride, but weight is back)

- 1) Rapid Fire: Use three balls and soft toss them immediately upon contact, one right after the other. This develops quick hands.
- 2) Drop ball: Have a batter and tosser stand parallel with each other with the left foot in line with the left foot of each. The tosser drops the ball from eye level and from a knee. You may think that the players may be too close to each other, and that is a legitimate concern. If the batter doesn't swing correctly, he will hit the tosser. A little encouragement for the batter.

BATTING DRILLS (cont.)

- 3) Fastball Drill: It is soft toss but from a distance and with more speed. Tosser stands to the side of batter and about 10 feet away and tosses underhand with a little bit more on the ball.
- 4) Back feed Extension: It is soft toss from behind the batter. Stand about 5 feet directly behind the batter and toss ball into strike zone. The batter can look at the tosser the first few times, but then must do it blindly. Develops quick hands.

1-2-3-4 Drill

This drill is designed for hitters who have difficulty attaining an inward turn. To correct this problem, the batter gets in their stance and begins moving back and forth. They should lift their heels off the ground one at a time, shifting their weight from one side to the other in a bit of a rhythm as follows:

- Rock toward the pitcher
- Then rock toward the catcher
- Rock back toward the pitcher
- Then rock toward the catcher (to coil and explode into the swing)

The goal of this drill is to attain some rhythm and movement, making an inward turn easier.

Chair Drill

This is an excellent drill for the hitter who tends to uppercut. Place a batting tee on the inside half of the plate. Next, place a folding chair behind the tee with the seat closest to the tee (hint: The tee should be slightly lower than the back of the chair). To execute this drill properly, the batter must swing with a slightly downward angle. If you do not physically swing slightly down through the ball, you will hit the back of the chair before you ever reach the ball, indicating that they are uppercutting.

4 Corners Drill (Develop Bunting Skills)

Players divide into 4 groups. Have them gather around each of the bases and home plate. A player uses the plate or base as a home plate and stands ready to drag, squeeze, or sacrifice bunt, with another player pitching from his knee about 10 feet away. Have someone catching, and the other players field with bare hands. Each player bunts the ball 5 times and then everyone rotates until all three types of bunts are laid down correctly, making sure that fundamentals are being done, with a coach at each station.



TEAM DEFENCE DRILLS

Backing Up Drill (Practice fielding, throwing, covering bases & backing up)

Position a player on first base, second base, home plate and a player backing up each of these positions. Position the remaining players in a row behind third base.

Coaches instruct the players on how to play the back-up position (15-20 feet behind the player receiving the throw and in line with the on-coming throw.) The player at third base will field and throw 3 balls and then move over to cover second base.

Make your hits (or throws) easy to field so it will keep the drill moving quickly. Hit them in the following order: (1) The first one right at third base, (2) The second one toward the pitchers' mound. (3) The third one a pop fly toward third base.

Place a coach between home and first base to take throws from players covering first base and second base. Some younger teams use this for their pre-game infield, as it is fast moving and involve all the players.

The coach will hit 3 balls for each player to field at third base. Throw the first one to first base, the second one to second base, and the third one to home.

After the throw home, hustle over to cover second base while the players covering bases and backing up rotate to:

- (1) 2nd base to 2nd base backup.
- (2) 2nd base backup to 1st base backup.
- (3) 1st base backup to 1st base.
- (4) 1st base to home plate backup.
- (5) Home plate back-up to home plate.
- (6) Home plate to the end of the line at 3rd base.

Players covering first base and second base, throw the ball to the coach between home and first base. Walk your players through this drill a couple of times to get a handle on how it is done.



Countdown Drill

To help players develop good hands, and a quick release. Have the players line up across from a partner about 20 feet apart. They are to make good throws back and forth as many times as they can while the coach counts down from 30 to zero. The player who does not have the ball at zero wins. (You should see the kids scramble for a dropped or loose ball.)

21 Outs

Put out your defensive team. Have a coach with a bat and base runners ready to go on contact. The coach hits the ball, the base runner reacts to the hit, and the defense must make the play correctly. The object is to get 21 outs in a row WITHOUT mishandling the ball! Start at zero and when the ball goes from the coaches bat to the defense, gets thrown for an out, and then relayed back to the catcher, and if there are no mistakes, one out is recorded. If the ball is bobbled, misplayed, or thrown awry, start again at zero. When the ball hits the catcher's glove, everyone on the team yells the number of outs, or you start over. As you get better you can add the following: If someone does not hustle or run out a fly ball, start over. If a player does not run the bases correctly, or the pitcher does not back up a specific throw, start over. Another variation is to have the defense switched every 3 or 6 outs.

PITCHING MECHANICS DRILLS

Balance Point Drill

Come set, lift leg and hold balance, sit, stride and separate, throwing to partner or net.

Stretch Position Drill

From set position, make pitches to partner or into net from a short distance (10 ft less than pitching distance).

Wind Up Position Drill

Using full wind up, make pitches to partner or into net (10 ft less than pitching distance).



Balance Point Drill (Develop good balance while pitching)

The pitcher goes through his wind up and delivery but stops himself at the balance point, and holds it for at least two seconds before continuing. The coach checks the position to make sure that the front leg is at the waist or higher. This allows the pitcher to prevent him from rushing once he takes the mound in a game.

Snap Wrist (Develop snap of wrist, delivery of ball out front of body)

This drill is for pitchers to help develop snap of wrist, delivery of ball out front of body, follow through and defensive position once the pitch is delivered.

Use a hand towel about 18" by 5". Fold the long side a few times until the cloth is 2" by 18". Form 2 lines, with one line of pitchers down on one knee, resting "glove side" elbow on other knee. Hold arm out (the one resting on knee) parallel to ground (with glove on) no higher than 18" above the ground. Players standing, hold out throwing hand (palm up), draping the folded cloth over their middle finger, and letting it hang down evenly on each side of their middle finger. Loosely holding the cloth in their fist, have pitchers go through normal windups, with the delivery being, slapping their partner's glove with cloth. Check for proper motion, balance and defensive position.

Sit & Hit the Bullseye (Develop good throwing techniques)

Two pitchers sit, with legs crossed, about 20-30 feet from each other. The receiver puts his glove in front of his face as the target. The thrower must hit the target without the ball bouncing, and with minimal rocking motion. This will require the elbow to be above the shoulder, and a good rotation of the shoulders to just get it there, thus teaching good technique.

No Rush (To alleviate rushing the lower body & develop good rhythm & pace)

From the wind-up position have the pitcher rock, turn and raise his leg to the balance position. However, instead of either stopping, or going on to pitch, he now lowers that leg to the ground next to and immediately behind the pivot foot. He should now be standing facing either 3b (rh) or 1b (LH), in good balance before beginning. Now he simply re-raises the non-pivot foot and pitches. This simple drill keeps the weight back while in the wind-up. Once the pitcher gets used to it, he can develop a nice natural flow, rock, turn, raise, drop, raise and pitch. Then alternate the drill every other pitch. Pitchers who are comfortable with it, can even do it between innings for a pitch or two just to reinforce their proper piece and keep from rushing.

These drills allow you to fine tune the body movements involved in the delivery with no fatigue on the arm. These are excellent to work on the days between throwing workouts or on days that you cannot get out and throw. They are called Shadow/Mirror Drills because they require you to be able to see

PITCHERS SHADOW/MIRROR DRILLS

yourself moving through the various positions which you can do using your shadow or a mirror. These Drills will help you develop consistent movements and they will help you develop your balance as it applies to the skill of pitching. You can also perform these drills with your eyes closed to give yourself a "feel" for these motions and positions. This will also increase your ability to sustain balance throughout your delivery.

Lift, Balance, and Sit Drill

from set position, lift leg and balance then sit and balance. Once you have held a balanced position for 10 seconds, return to start position. You can also balance a book on your head to add some challenge to the drill.

Weight Transfer and Deliver Drill

from stride position (weight back, arm up, lead side aligned) give slightly in back knee to initiate momentum and transfer weight forward as the arm moves forward to release the ball.

Sit, Stride, Separate Drill

from knee lift position, sit, stride, and get into position to deliver the pitch (weight on bent back leg, arm in "L" position). Check to make sure weight is back, arm is up, and lead side is aligned (heel to heel with lead toe pointing to the plate) before weight is transferred and arm moves forward.

Balance Drill

from leg lift position, sit and balance 3 times then go through pitching motion and stay balanced on front foot and sit 3 times on front foot.



PITCHER FIELDING DRILLS

Pitcher Read & React (Fielding drill)

Pitchers line up on the mound or designated area. One pitcher goes to homeplate, one to first base and others remain on the mound. The pitchers on the mound deliver the ball to homeplate, then read and react to the ball. If the player at the plate rolls the ball out, the pitcher throwing the ball reacts, charges the ball, and completes the throw to first base (bunt reaction). If the player- at the plate rolls the ball towards first base, the pitcher then races to the baseline to cover first base and receives the throw from the player playing 1B. If the player at the plate (once receiving the throw) turns his back to the pitcher and runs behind the plate, the pitcher then reacts and covers the plate as if it was a passed ball, receiving the throw from the player at the plate. Player at the plate also has the option to throw a sharp one hop to the pitcher, who can also turn and throw to another pitcher at 2B to complete the double play. All players' rotate stations so that all pitchers have completed each segment of the drill a couple of times. This drill is a very good one because pitchers do not have any idea of what their reaction is to be until they read and react to the ball, as in a game situation.

5 man pitcher bunt fielding drill (this is a drill for all pitchers)

Four players form a square about 30-50 feet apart (further apart depending on age). One player stands in the middle as the pitcher. One of the players in the square has a ball, and will be the 'catcher' that the pitcher will face to start the drill. The other players in the square will then be at each 'base' (1st base, 2nd base, 3rd base). The pitcher in the middle pretends to throw a ball from the stretch. The 'catcher' with the ball rolls the ball out either left of, right of or at the pitcher, and calls "1-1-1", "2-2-2" or "3-3-3" to indicate where the ball should be thrown. The pitcher throws the ball to the appropriate 'base' for the force out or tag out (depending on where the runner(s) were situated prior to the pitch). The player who catches the ball is now the 'catcher', and the pitcher will face him to start the drill again. As the 'catcher' changes, so do the base responsibilities of the fielders. After 10 turns, pitchers switch so there is a new pitcher.



CATCHER DRILLS

Blockouts (Position warm up)

Each one of our catchers has their own set of catcher's gear, which speeds up the drill. Players pair up across from one another and in full gear practice throwing short hops to each other, working on dropping down into the proper block out position, keeping the ball in front of body, etc. Use tennis balls or safety balls to start with.

Foul Ball Drill (Improve the technique of catching foul balls)

Catcher 1 throws foul balls in the vicinity of home plate to catcher 2. Catcher 2 practices locating and catching the foul balls. Catchers should remember to turn their back to the infield (face the fence)

Framing Drill (Improve catching when ball is outside shoulder area)

A player stands in front of a catcher, who is in his normal position behind home plate (or any base). The player uses the ball on a stick to simulate pitches that are high, low, inside, and outside of home plate. The catcher practices framing the pitches and shifting the body weight for pitches that are slightly outside the width of the shoulders.



Soft Hands – Catch (Improve relaxation of hands and framing)

This drill helps in developing the soft hands necessary to receive the ball properly. Team up two catchers – no gloves. Catcher 1 throws tennis balls from 20-30 feet away to catcher 2. Catcher 2 practices giving with the hands when catching the ball.

Catcher Scoop & Locate

Three catchers group for this drill. One catcher sets in a crouched catching position, one player stands behind him with a baseball, and the third player stands downfield about 50 feet. The player standing behind the crouched catcher rolls the ball out in front of the catcher at different angles, making the catcher explode from his stance, circle the ball using proper techniques, scoop the ball, and make the throw to the other player downfield. Players also rotate in this drill.

Passed Ball Communication

Improve passed ball communication between catcher & pitcher with a runner on base. The catcher and pitcher are at their defensive positions. The head coach is behind the catcher at home plate. The head coach lays down 3 balls behind the catcher – one straight back, one on the 3rd base side and one on the 1st base side. The coach, from behind the catcher, points to a ball. The pitcher goes through his throw from the set position with out a ball, then runs in pointing at the ball the coach indicated, shouting “1,1,1” for balls on the 1st base side, “2,2,2” for balls straight back and “3,3,3” for balls on the third base side. It is the responsibility of the pitcher to call the play an point at the ball.

BASERUNNING DRILLS

Base Running Relay 1 (Develop good baserunning)

The manager divides team into two teams and then splits each team in half. Half stay on the foul line (down the line a bit in the outfield) and the other half face them from center field. (You'll have a line at each position for each team). Winning team is first to have all players swap sides by running to and then tagging their teammate. Do this a couple of times and then ask if they want it to be even more fun and have them run backwards. This is the time when you should be looking for the player you want on third base, with the game on the line and you need to score that winning run.



Base Running Relay 2 (Improves baserunning skills & stamina)

Split the team in half, with one group of players behind home plate and other half behind second base. Give the first player of each group a ball (this will be the "baton" for the relay race). On "GO!", the first player from each team begins running the bases, ball in hand. After making a complete lap around the bases (back to each player's starting point), that player hands the ball off to the next person who continues the relay race. First group of players to finish the race wins.

Baserunning (To give players practice running bases)

Each player stands in the batter's box holding a bat. The player swings at an imaginary ball on command, disposes of the bat properly, and then runs to first base. The coach stands at first base and calls: "Run through the bag", or "Take a turn", or "Second" loudly enough so that the runner can hear the command two or three strides before first base. Position a coach at second base to direct runners coming from first. This coach calls: "Stay", or "Round it", or "Third". The third base coach can give similar commands. So each runner can get the full spectrum of running after a one base, two bases, three bases, or home run hit. The key to making aggressive turns on the base paths and heading on a straight line from first to second, second to third, or third to home is dipping the left shoulder and leaning the upper body toward the inside of the infield as the player rounds each bag.

Burma's (To develop running skills)

Divide the players equally among the four bases. One at a time from each base will be running, with the others waiting their turn. At 'go' from the coach, the four take off. Proper technique is a must and the goal is to do a certain amount right in a row, before going on to something else.

- ◆ Player at the plate: Simulates a swing. Takes off as if hitting a double and possibly a triple. Makes a good turn at first. Picks up the 3rd base coach half way to 2nd. Rounds 2nd hard, 'picks up the ball' and returns to 2nd quickly.
- ◆ Player at first: From a lead, goes from 1st to 3rd. Picks up the 3rd base coach half way to 3rd. Makes a hard turn at 3rd then returns quickly.
- ◆ Player at 2nd: From a lead, goes from 2nd to home. Picks up the 3rd base coach and makes a good turn. Runs hard through the plate.
- ◆ Player at 3rd: From a lead, goes back to the bag to tag. Takes off for home, rounds it, then takes off for 1st as if beating out a single. Looks inside towards the 1st base dugout as he crosses the bag for possible overthrow.

BASERUNNING DRILLS (Cont.)

Run Through 1st (Develop player's ability to run through 1st base & recognize coaching signals)

All players line up single file about 10 feet from home plate. One at a time, each player comes to the plate. With bat in hand, player swings at an imaginary pitch, drops the bat and runs full speed to 1st. The base coach at first either gives them the "hold up" sign" or waves them to second. If the player is to hold at 1st, make sure they do not slow down, but "run through" the bag and look to their right.

Run & Steal (Develop aggressive baserunning)

Runners start at home plate. Swing and round first properly taking a wide, aggressive, turn and dive back into the bag. Runner gets up quickly, takes an aggressive lead, and takes off to steal 2nd sliding into the bag. Runner then gets up takes an aggressive secondary lead and dives back into the bag. He then steals third repeating the slide, getting up and taking an aggressive lead off third, in foul ground, dives back into the bag, coming back on the foul line. He gets up and sprints home (no slide at plate). The next runner takes off from home when the previous runner completes his dive into first and touches the bag.

Simon Says (Increase reactions to game situations when baserunning)

Position players in one row down the first base line, 5 to 8 feet apart. Player will be simulating baserunning. Players will run or tag-up according to the game situation you give them. Give them game situations using a "Simon Says" command. For instance, Simon says, "Pop Up" would mean the players would return (tag-up) to the line they started from. Once players get to the line at second base repeat the procedure (Simon Says) and send them back to the first base line. This drill can be used for conditioning at each turnout. Keep the drill moving quickly as it teaches players to think under pressure. Vary the commands between tag-up and run situations without setting a pattern. Pause briefly between the situation (pop fly) and what happens (he drops it). Make up some of your own game situations to add variety



CONDITIONING DRILLS

Glove Drill

Split up the players into groups of 4 or 5. Have them line up and put their gloves in the outfield at about 25-foot intervals apart, away from them. They start the drill with a ball in their hand, running to the first glove and setting the ball on it. Players then return to the line, then go back and get the ball, then return to the line. Next, they go to the second glove and set the ball down and return to the line and so on. Continue until all the players have gone through the drill at least once.

Pick-ups

Players pair up with a baseball, no gloves. One player will get down on one knee with the other player about 5-7 feet in front ready to move side to side to field the ball. The player kneeling rolls the ball to one side of the standing player who shuffles his feet to field the ball with 2 hands. Upon fielding the ball, he flips it back to the tosser, who makes him move to the other side. Fielding players should only take 3-4 shuffles to field the ball. If more than that, they are too far away. Do sets of 20 to start and build up during the year.

Around the World

Take the players to the foul pole in left or right field, time them from foul pole to foul pole to get a base time. Then have a set time that they should complete each of the laps. You can use 6 or 7 laps as that would be the number of innings you play. Require that all team members finish under the time required to make the lap count.

Dive backs

The players start out at Home Plate and run around first base, making an aggressive turn, and then dive back into the bag. After diving back they get up as fast as they can and head to second base to do the same thing. They do this also at third then slide feet first into home plate to end their round.

The Glove

We split up the players in groups of 4 or 5 and they line up and put their gloves in the outfield at about 25 foot intervals apart, away from them. They start the drill with a ball in their hand and run to the first glove and set the ball on it and come back to the line and go back and get the ball and come back to the line and go to the second glove and set the ball down and go back to the line and so on and so forth, until all the players have gone through and the winners get out of laps at the end of the practice.



BASEBALL PRACTICE PLAN

EXAMPLE

TEAM: BULLDOGS

Date: May 2

Location: STAR FIELD

Start time: 1:00 P.M. **Finish time:** 2:30 P.M.

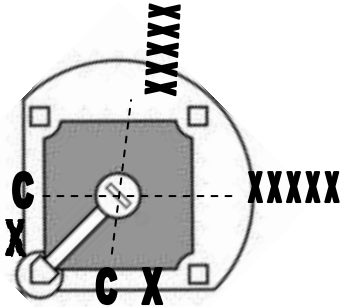
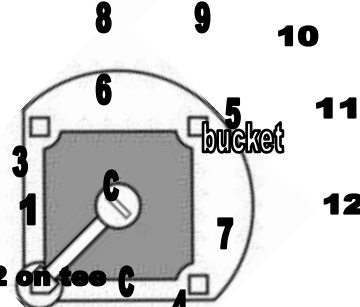
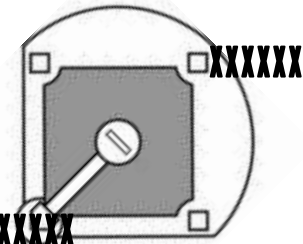
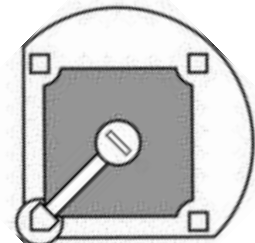
Equipment: BATS, HELMETS, BALLS, BASES

Objective of practice: DEFENSIVE SKILLS, FUN!

Time	Topic	Activity/Drills	Coaches	Key points
10 min.	Warm-up	Stretch Drills	John	
10 min.	Throwing	Do drills – add relay drill	John	Emphasize follow through
10 min.	Team Defense (Drill #1 on back)	Ground balls hit by coaches	John / Mike	- ready position - move to ball - step and Throw
10 min.	Offense	Running from home to second base	Mike	- make banana loop - touch inside of bag
30 min.	Batting (Drill #2 on back)	Batting Practice	John / Mike	- drive ball up middle - batters must keep weight back (no lunging) - 7 swings, not 7 hits
10 min.	Infield/Outfield	All players on field	John / Mike	- outfield throw to cut-off man - “Highlight Time” for players, make big plays - Mike hit balls, John in field with players discussing technique and strategy
5 min.	Running (#3 on back)	Relay race	Mike	- run hard - use proper technique
5 min.	Wrap-up		John / Mike	- evaluation of day - date of next practice

Field diagrams on back

PLANNING SHEET FOR PRACTICES – Field Diagrams

	<p>Time 10 Min</p>	<p>Objective Proper ground ball technique</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 lines of players - 2 players, one to catch for each coach who is hitting balls - player catching will rotate back into the line every 5 players - inaccurate throw – 5 push-ups <p>X = players C = coach</p>
	<p>Time 30 min</p>	<p>Objective Batting Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - players numbered 1-12 - players bat in numbered order - on deck batter hit off tee with Coach Mike - one player always move up to look after ball bucket - two players always outside of fence for foul balls - 2 bunts and 7 swings per batters (swings – not hits!)
	<p>Time 5 min.</p>	<p>Objective Conditioning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - two lines of players, one at second and one at home - on "go", one player from each line will circle the bases - when a player reach their start point the next player goes (players must start and finish by touching the bag/plate) - runners must touch bases on their way around - first team finished is the winners, losers pick up the bases
	<p>Time</p>	<p>Objective</p>

BASEBALL PRACTICE PLAN

TEAM: _____ Date: _____

Location: _____

Start time: _____ Finish time: _____

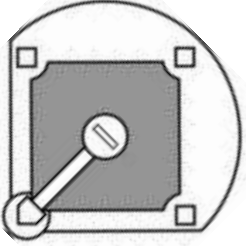
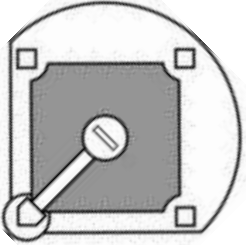
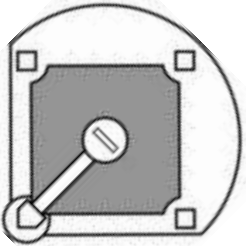
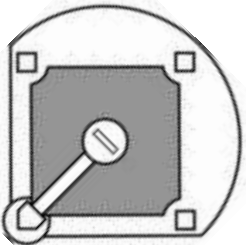
Equipment: _____

Objective of practice: _____

Time	Topic	Activity/Drills	Coaches	Key points

Field diagrams on back

PLANNING SHEET FOR PRACTICES – Field Diagrams

	Time	Objective
	Time	Objective
	Time	Objective
	Time	Objective