

Coaching and Practice Basics March 26, 2004

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Ten Keys to a Good Practice

1. Preparation -- A good practice is a result of planning. We have spent over an hour planning for a single practice.
2. Make it fun. *Research suggests that boring practices are one of the top reasons kids stop playing a sport.*
3. Make all drills competitive. Simulate the pressures the players will experience in a game. Have rewards or "punishments" for practically every drill.
4. Focus on the fundamentals of the game.
5. Make it repetitious. Practice the same things over and over again but with different drills.
6. Keep it moving. Observe the "8 minute rule." No player should be doing the same thing for more than 8 minutes at a time.
7. Do things outside of practice to build team spirit (examples include swimming parties, miniature golf, rafting).
8. Early season practices work on basics/fundamentals/breakdowns. Later practices work on putting it all together into game situations.
9. Never explain a fundamental to one player while 10 others watch.
10. Observe the 80-20 rule. 80 percent of your communication should be compliments/encouragement, 20 percent corrections.

Basics to be covered each day in practice

- Rules
- Running
- Throwing
- Offensive drills
- Defensive drills
- Pitching
- Attitude

Top Five Most Popular Drills

- Missile Drill
- Fence Drill
- Safe Sliding Drill
- Relay Races
- Round Town (scrimmaging)

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Sample Early Season Practice

5:00 – 6:00 Pre-game warm-up, stretching, hitting,

6:00-6:20 **Running drills**

- HOME TO FIRST ON A WALK
- DELAYED STEAL FROM SECOND TO THIRD
- SECOND TO THIRD ON GROUND BALL TO SECOND
- BASERUNNING MADNESS DRILL
- SAFE SLIDING DRILL

6:20-6:40 **Throwing Drills**

- READY, SET, THROW FORM
- READY, SET, THROW PARTNER
- QUICK FEET DRILL
- INFIELD BUCKET DRILL

6:40-7:10 **Outfielders in Hitting Stations**

- BUNTING STATION
- SOFT-TOSS STATION
- BATTING "T" STATION
- SOLO HITTER STATION
- "THUNDER STICK" STATION

6:40-7:10 **Infielders fielding drills**

- GROUND BALL FORM - SOFT TOSS BACK AND FORTH ON GROUND
- GROUND BALLS WITH "PADDLES," LOSERS RUN (2 LINES)
- BACK-PEDDLE DRILL – 2 TEAMS. LOSERS RUN.
- HOOVER DRILL
- SHORT HOP BALLS DRILL (WITH TENNIS BALLS)
- BACK-HAND AND FORE-HAND DRILL
- INFIELD FLIES WITH TENNIS RACQUET DRILL
- GROUND BALLS CLOSE AT HAND THROW TO FIRST DRILL
- RECEIVING THROWS AT A BASE DRILL

7:10-7:40 **Infielders at hitting stations, Outfielders doing drills**

Basics of fielding fly balls – review and then hit to two lines. Have them catch and throw.

- REVIEW PROPER FOOTWORK TECHNIQUE
- GOING BACK ON BALL - DROP-STEP FIRST, THEN CROSSOVER STEP (IF THE BALL IS HIT OVER YOUR HEAD).
- GET BEHIND THE BALL.
- CATCH THE BALL WHILE YOU ARE COMING IN TOWARD THE INFIELD, SO YOUR MOMENTUM IS TOWARD THE INFIELD NOT AWAY FROM IT.

- THROW THE BALL TO THE CUT-OFF MAN. DON'T HOLD THE BALL IN THE OUTFIELD!
- TALK TO TEAMMATE WHEN BALL IS HIT TO HIM.
- BACK UP ALL PLAYS IN THE INFIELD.
- BACK UP OTHER OUTFIELDERS.
- NEVER THROW BEHIND THE RUNNER.
- HOW TO FIELD LINE DRIVES
 - Line Drives Above the Waist - Catch the ball with your hands and fingers pointed up.
 - Line Drives Below the Waist - Catch the ball with your hands and fingers pointed down.

Outfield Drills

- FIELDING GROUND BALLS DRILL – Hit ground balls with both options (two options)
- DROP TO ONE KNEE - It's the safest way to catch, but it takes the longest. It keeps the ball in front of you. This is the method we will use with no one on base.
- THE "DO-OR-DIE" - Only use this technique in game-saving situations like the last inning with the tying or winning run at second base. You scoop the ball up on the run and come up throwing.
- OVER THE SHOULDER CATCH DRILL
- ZIG – ZAG DRILL
- LINE DRIVES RIGHT AT THEM DRILL
- THE REBOUND DRILL
- BALLS IN THE SUN DRILL – SHIELD WITH GLOVE

7:40-7:55 FENCE DRILL

7:55-8:25 MISSILE DRILL

8:25-8:30 RELAY RACES

Sample Late Season Practice

5:00 – 6:00 Pre-game warm-up, stretching, hitting

Throughout this practice a pitcher is always working with a coach on pitching. Each pitcher gets about 12 minutes throwing.

6:00-6:15 Running drills

- REVIEW THIRD-BASE COACHING SIGNS
- HOME TO FIRST
- FROM FIRST BASE ON A BUNT – MAKE SURE BALL IS ON THE GROUND.
- FROM FIRST ON HIT TO OUTFIELD
- FROM SECOND ON HIT TO THE OUTFIELD
- FROM SECOND ON HIT TO SHORTSTOP
- DELAYED STEAL FROM SECOND
- SAFE SLIDING DRILL

6:15-6:25 Throwing Drills

- QUICK FEET DRILL
- INFIELD BUCKET DRILL
- RECEIVING CUT-OFFS AND RELAYING HOME (COACH THROWS FROM OUTFIELD TO FIELDER WHO DEMONSTRATES PROPER FOOTWORK AND THROWS HOME)

6:30 – 6:45 Players in position with Jim hitting situations without runners.

- STEALING SECOND ON A WALK WITH A MAN ON THIRD
- RUN DOWN BETWEEN FIRST AND SECOND TO GET A GUY HOME
- STEAL THIRD ON A FAKE BUNT
- FROM FIRST TO THIRD ON A BUNT
- PLAY CALLING, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 6.5, 46

7:00-7:30 Bunting situations/stealing and pass balls

7:30-7:45 Live situations from an offensive perspective with players running

- FIRST TO THIRD ON A BUNT
- HOME TO SECOND ON A WALK WITH MAN ON THIRD – GET IN A RUN DOWN
- FROM FIRST TO GET IN A RUNDOWN WITH A MAN ON THIRD
- STEALING THIRD ON A FAKE BUNT ATTEMPT
- DIRT BALL DRILL

7:45-8:05 Round town - Teams of four competition five situations

- MAN ON FIRST, 0 OUTS, TIE GAME, BOTTOM OF THE 6TH
- MAN ON SECOND, 0 OUTS, TIE GAME, BOTTOM OF THE 6TH.
- MAN ON FIRST AND SECOND, DOWN 2 RUNS, 1 OUT, BOTTOM OF THE 6TH
- MAN ON THIRD, 1 OUT, TIE GAME, BOTTOM OF THE 6TH
- MAN ON SECOND, 1 OUT, TIE GAME.

8:05-8:20 Infield Pre-game drill

8:20-8:30 RELAY RACES

Fundamentals and Drills

Running

BASICS

- Watch the coach after every pitch for a sign
- When running from home to first, you must run outside base line
- Just before and after rounding second base do not watch the ball, watch your coach.
- Run on anything with 2 outs
- Run on ground ball when forced
- Jump off base on two steps on every pitch
- On hit always turn to second base after rounding first
- When you get a walk, run to first
- If you aren't sure if you should slide, slide
- With runner on first and third, less than 2 outs, runner on first should always steal second.
- When on third base, always be ready to steal home on a pass ball. You automatically run until the coach tells you to stop.
- When on third base, anytime the ball is hit to the outfield stay on third until the ball is caught or it hits the ground. Then run. You will easily make it home on a hit.
- When you are on first or second base – if the ball is hit so the outfield is going back on the ball stay on the base to tag up. If the ball is hit so the fielder is standing still or coming in on the ball go halfway to the next base.
- Always run out every play to the fullest of your ability. Assume the fielder will drop the ball.
- On-deck batter should coach runner coming home – tell him whether to slide or stay up.
- Sliding - no head first advancement.
- Never make the first or last out of the inning at third base
- Never make the first out of an inning at home.
- With two outs, man on third and you are on first and are given the steal sign, always get in a run down until the runner on third scores.
- When you are on base and the bunt sign is given to the batter, make sure the bunt is on the ground before you run. (Don't get doubled off the base if the bunt is popped up.)
- When on base, always tag up on a foul ball no matter where it is hit.
- If you are on third base and the outfielder holds the ball or hesitates, run home.
- In a run-down situation, if your teammate is in a run down on a base ahead of you, the runner should advance to that base. Assume your teammate will be out.

SITUATIONS TO PRACTICE

Have the entire team go through these situations one player at a time. We do 3-4 situations each practice.

- Home to first, home to second, home to third. (all the while emphasizing proper running technique including hands up when sliding)
- First to third
- From second on a fly ball
- From first on a hit to the outfield
- Tagging up at third on a fly ball or a hit to the outfield
- Running from second and third with ground balls to second, third, first, and short (how to play it)
- Delayed steal to second, third, home
- Stealing second
- On first base with a batter bunting a pop-up, make sure the ball is on the ground.

DRILLS

- **BASERUNNING MADNESS DRILL** - Split the team in half and form two lines at home plate, one staggered ahead and inside the other. Coach stands at the pitcher's circle. When he says go, the lead runners in both lines take off. One runs straight through first base as if he is beating out a groundball, the other makes a turn and continues into second. You now have runners at first and second and two lines of runners still at home. At the next go, the drill continues in the same manner but the runner on second now rounds third and scores while the runner on first takes third. Now every base should be occupied. It continues again, with the runner on third tagging up and scoring. Two runners will now score each time the coach says go. They will then return to the end of the opposite line and the bases will always remain loaded.
- **SAFE SLIDING Drill** – Two groups with 2 large pieces of cardboard. Have the kids start their slide hitting the piece of cardboard (kids in stocking feet). This causes the cardboard to slide on the grass instead of the kid so there is less chance for injury. Using a stick that they have to slide under to stay low. (We need to make sure they practice good form - slide more on their back than side and keep the hands up and back).
- **RELAY RACES**- Split the team in half, with one group of kids behind home plate and other half behind second base. Give the first kid of each group a ball (this will be the "baton" for the relay race). At "GO!" the first kid from each team begins running the bases, ball in hand. After making a complete lap around the bases (back to each kid's starting point), that kid hands the ball off to the next kid in line, who continues the relay race. First group of kids to finish the race wins.
- **DIRT BALL DRILL** -. Players are set up at all three bases. They are independent of each other because different bases have different rules for a

ball in the dirt. A coach pitches from the rubber and mixes in strikes and balls in the dirt to the catcher. Any time the ball is about to bounce the whole team must yell "DIRT." This helps you make sure everyone is paying attention. Base runners on first should automatically go when the ball is in the dirt and the catcher does not field it cleanly. Runners on second need to react to the ball in the dirt and then decide if they would be safe. Read and Decide. If the ball kicks away from the catcher they should go. If the catcher blocks the ball in front of him the base runner on second should stay. The runner on third base is similar to the one on second. Again, he reads and decides. Coaches should emphasize that for this drill each base is independent of each other. Just because the runner from first goes to second doesn't mean the runner on second has to go.

LEADS AND BREAKS - Align all players on the first base foul line, in the outfield. The line becomes the base. A coach acts as the pitcher, somewhere near the infield dirt, near where the second baseman would play. All players should have a good view. The coach should alternate between rightie, leftie, stretch, windup, stepping off the rubber, and picks. Players are given a scenario before every pitch (on first base straight steal, on first base hit and run, on second base two out lead, delay steal, etc.). Players assume the correct position, take a proper lead, and react according to the play called and the movement of the pitcher. Other coaches should be positioned to watch players and make corrections.

Throwing

THROWING BASICS

- Setting the "t"
- Follow-thru
- Tuck glove under shoulder
- Aim for the other players chest
- Snap your wrist into your partner's eyes.

DRILLS

- **CROSSED-LEG SITTING DRILL** – partners sit 10 feet apart on ground. They throw the ball back and forth with a 4-seem grip on top of the ball, other hand at elbow, follow-thru. Objective is to snap the ball with their wrist at their partner "hitting their partner in they eyes with their fingers."
- **TWO-KNEE THROWING DRILL** – partners on both knees 15 feet apart. Partners give a good target with quick-out. holding hands together to the midline of chest, points shoulder to partner, keeps elbows at chest level, fix eyes on target, strong 4-seem rotation.
- **ONE-KNEE THROWING DRILL** – Same as two knee but on one knee 20 feet apart.
- **TEN-TOES DRILL** – partners stand 20 feet apart with their 10 toes pointed at their partner. They keep their feet stationary as they throw with proper form.
- **READY, SET, THROW PARTNER**
- **LONG-TOSS THROWING COMPETITION** - Each player should have a partner. One player on the first base line, the other on the line between second and third. Spread the team out so they have ample room between each other. The players throw back and forth on the coach's command. If a ball gets by either player that two-some is disqualified. At the coach's command, the players still in the game move back 2 steps. This continues until the players can be as far as 80 feet apart. The game continues until everyone but one team is disqualified. They are declared the winners.
- **QUICK FEET DRILL** – Divide into 2 teams. Players line-up on the foul line. The Coach throws the ball to the first player in line who returns it to the coach all the while showing proper throwing mechanics. That player then returns to the back of the line. The first team to get through the line 4 times is the winner (losers run). The emphasis here is on proper form and establishing quick feet when throwing.
- **RELAY DRILL** – 3 players on a team. One player on the first baseline, one player on the second to thirdbase line, one player 60 feet beyond the second to thirdbase line. Ball starts with player on first base line who throws to the player in the middle, who receives the ball and throws to the player in left field. Proper relay form is taught. You can make this a contest by giving them a certain amount of rotations and the first team to complete it wins.

- INFIELD BUCKET DRILL - This drill is designed to teach the kids to get rid of the ball and not hold it. Two teams. The first team will line up one behind the other in the third-base position. The others line up in shortstop position. A five-gallon bucket is placed upside down on home plate and first base. A coach will drop a ball in front of the first person in line. The player has 3 seconds (which the coach counts out loudly) to pick up the ball and throw at the bucket (third throws to home, short to first. Each player gets four turns. Team with most hits wins. Other team runs.
- OUTFIELD BUCKET DRILL – Divide into two teams. Each team lines up around 80 feet from home plate. One in right field, one in left field. Put a large garbage can facing left field and one facing right field. Each line needs a coach. The coach throws a soft fly ball to the first player in line. The player shows proper outfield mechanics and attempts to throw the ball into the can 80 feet away at home plate. Each team gets 4 rounds. The team with the most balls in the cans wins. Losers run.
- ROUND THE HORN DRILL – A player is at each infield base (home, first, second, and third). The player at home has the ball and throws to third, who throws to second, who throws to first, who throws to home. They do this for 3-4 rounds and the coach times them. The team with the faster time for X amount of times around the horn wins.
- 21 – Players stand about 50 feet apart. They throw back and forth to each other giving each other a target chest high. Each player judges the other rating their throws either 3, 2, or 1 points. A 3 is awarded for a throw that hits the target without the player needing to move their glove. A 2 is awarded for a throw that is close to their glove. And a 1 is awarded for a throw that is caught but not close to the target. A 0 is awarded for throws that cannot be caught. The first player to 21 wins the game.
- UPSIDE DOWN PENTAGON. – 5 PLAYERS X1 X2 X3 X4 X5 - 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. We shorten the distance to work on quick hands and lengthen the distance to provide long throwing for our players. This is a good drill because it forces the players to follow their throw. By doing this the players are more likely to make a correct throwing motion and step directly at their target. We have noticed that in drills which require a player to return to the end of their line after making a throw the player tends to be in a hurry to go in an opposite direction of their throw which screws up extension and follow through.

- STRIPED BALL – Take a black marking pen and make a wide stripe around the entire four seams of the baseball. If the player throw with good spin, the stripe will be clearly visible thoroughout the flight of the ball. Any off-center spin will distrot the stripe on the ball.
- THROWING ON YOUR BACK – The player lies on his back with his hand above his head and his head slightly raised. He throws the ball up and catches it by himself. This forces backspin rotation.
- Down the line – Playing catch down the foul line is another technique that will help the player monitor the spin of the ball. If the ball deviates off the foul line, off-center rotation is indicated.

Hitting

BASICS

- Never guess pitches, rely on your instincts. Always assume fastball and react to off-speed or curve.
- Be confident, be arrogant, always believe you are going to get a hit,
- Never anticipate a walk, just take it if it comes. It is our belief that a coach should never encourage a player to take a walk when batting. This sends a bad message to the player.
- Two strikes protect the plate and choke up
- Never swing at a pitch you do not like with 1 or no strikes on you.

HITTING STATIONS

The objective is for each player to get 100-150 swings in during batting practice. Use coaches and parents to man stations. We often work in groups of two so no batter is standing taking 30 swings at a time. Otherwise, the result is fatigue which results in bad hitting form. So have players in groups of 2 rotating after approximately 10 swings.

Stations can include a combination of the following:

- Bunting
- Soft toss including 2-ball soft-toss
- Solo hitter
- Batting tee
- Live pepper
- Hitting
- Thunder stick drill hitting dummy golf balls
- Short toss

HITTING DRILLS

- ROUND TOWN – four players batting with a coach pitching (player is optional but must throw strikes), all other players in positions (may need coaches to play positions also). Each player gets to continue hitting until they make 2 outs. When they make their second out they rotate in the field for another player.
- GETTING HIT BY PITCH - Practice players getting hit by pitch (use a tennis ball), turn shoulder in to ball, do not open up the body to the ball.
- HITTING WITH A 3-2 COUNT.
- HITTING WITH AN 0-2 COUNT
- BUNTING STATIONS. – A line of players at second and a line at home. Each player bunts 10 times at each station. We place buckets that they must bunt through to qualify as a successful bunt. The player with the most bunts in 20 wins. AN ALTERNATIVE IS TO HAVE THE PLAYER AT HOME BUNT AND RUN TO FIRST AND THE PLAYER AT SECOND TO BUNT AND RUN TO THIRD SIMULATING A BUNTING FOR A HIT SITUATION.

- BUNTING SITUATIONS
 - Runner at first
 - Runner at third

- MISSILE DRILL - 3-4 batters at a time hitting with a coach pitching. You also need one coach to keep score on paper and one coach as the judge. There are 3-5 rounds for each group of batters depending on the time available. Assuming 5 rounds, the first batter gets 5 swings. If the pitch is a ball and he does not swing, the pitch does not count against him. If he takes a strike, he loses the pitch. On each hit, the judge rates the hit on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being a "missile" (a home run or a hit about as far that player can hit) After round one, the batters get 4 hits, then 3 in the next round, then 2 on the next, and finally 1. On the last round (when they get 1 hit) if they score a 4 or a 5 they get to keep hitting until they get a score of 3 or less. Player with the most points wins. It is also fun to keep track of each time you do this drill to see who is the missile champ for the pre-season.

- HULA HOOP BUNTING - In order to develop proper bunting skills, coaches should teach the fundamentals of bat control. To begin, take three hula-hoops and place them in front of home plate in three different bunting areas (first base line, directly in front of home plate, and third base line). Assign each of the areas a number, and instruct the kids to aim at a respective hula-hoop while practicing their bunting (if possible, use three different colored hoops). Run the drill by throwing an equal number of batting practice pitches to each bunter, with a consistent number of attempts at each hoop. For example, you could throw each player twelve pitches, and have them bunt four pitches at each hoop respectively. Keep track of how many bunts actually stop in the hula-hoop, and total that number for each player. You can run a competition with the winner being the player who successfully bunts the most pitches into the correct hula-hoop.

- SHORTSCREEN DRILL - Tosser behind an L-screen approximately 30 feet away from hitter. The tosser should pinpoint the corners and move the ball up and down throwing a high percentage of strikes. After a few pitches, the tosser begins to call out a count just before delivering the pitch (i.e. 3-0 or 1-2 or hit and run).

Defensive Drills

- **ROUND THE FIELD DRILL**- this is a great drill for the first practice to begin to get a feel of which positions players are adept at. The drill requires two coaches hitting balls. One player at each position in the field and each coach has a player as a catcher. One coach stands on the first-base line, the other coach stands on the third-base line. The coach on the first base line hits consecutively to the player at third, then short, then left, then center. The coach on the third-base line hits consecutively to the first baseman, second baseman, and then right fielder. After 3 rounds each player rotates to a new position. In about 15 minutes you get to see each player at each position receive numerous fly balls and grounders.
- **FENCE DRILL** - The coach stands just in front of the pitchers mound 40 feet or so feet from the fielder who is standing 5 feet in front of the backstop. The coach has a tennis racquet and a dozen balls. The fielder has 20 feet of fence to cover and 10 hits from the coach. The "box" for the fielder is 6 feet tall and 20 feet wide. The coach hits the tennis balls to the left and the right, up and down. The pace between hits quickens. A clean catch is not necessary to score. The player need only keep the ball from hitting the fence to his rear. Person with the most out of 10 wins. This is a very popular drill and one that helps the players develop quick reactions.
- **PRE-GAME DRILL** – Practice a pre-game drill prior to your first game. Use this to get the players mentally and physically into the game. It should be fast-paced and the same every time.

Infield

BASICS

Infielder should have knees bent, but low, balanced on the balls of his feet. His glove should be on the ground with his free hand next to his glove. The player should field the ball in front of him keeping his glove on the ground until the ball is right at him.

THINGS TO COVER WITH INFIELDBERS

- Practice throwing the ball around after outs
- Proper positioning on pitches.
- Who is covering where on bunts?
- Who is covering steals?
- First and Third situations.
- Runner on second situations
- Runner on third situations
- Cut-off throws from outfield – who covers where?
- Backing up.
- Run down situations
- Appeal plays

- Covering pass balls.

DRILLS

- GROUND BALL FORM - Players stand 10 feet apart and softly toss the ball back and forth on the ground demonstrating the proper ground ball form.
- GROUND BALLS WITH PADDLES - A coach on the first-base line and one on the third-base line. Each has a bucket of balls and a player as a catcher. The coach hits ground balls to the first person in line standing between first and second (or second and third for the coach on the first-base line). The players use their gloves or the "paddles." The player with the most consecutive successfully played ground balls is the winner. Losers run.
- BACK-PEDDLE DRILL - 2 teams. The first player moves forward under control from the starting line. Coach rolls a ball to him and the player breaks down and fields the ball. The player then BACK PEDDLES as fast as he can to the starting line and flips the ball to players on the side waiting their turn. When he reaches the starting line, he moves forward again and breaks down to field the second ball. The player BACK PEDDLES again and repeats for the third ball. Coach won't roll the balls until the player is moving. This is a timed drill with the team that completes the most players in four minutes winning. Losers run.
- HOOVER DRILL - Have infielders start about 30-40 ft from coach. Infielder starts with glove open and fingertips on the ground. Coach or partner rolls the ball to infielder. The glove stays in contact with the ground and open to the ball the entire time the ball is motion except for the last movement. The last movement can be up, but never down. This gets the players to feel the old "stay down and work up" concept.
- SHORT HOP BALLS WITH TENNIS BALLS – Coach stands around 15 feet from the player and throws short-hops to the fielder using tennis balls.
- BACKHAND AND FOREHAND BALLS – Coach stands around 15 feet from player and throws balls to the player's backhand and forehand.
- INFIELD FLIES WITH TENNIS RACQUET – With a tennis racquet and tennis balls, the coach hits major league fly balls to the infielders.
- GROUND BALLS CLOSE AT HAND THROW TO FIRST - With the coach standing around 15 feet in front of the player, the coaches rolls ground balls to the player who fields and throws. The emphasis here is on throwing form.
- RUN-DOWN DRILLS - PRACTICE AND REVIEW THE BASICS OF RUN-DOWNS.
 - Players should always run the runner back to the preceding base.
 - Players should never field the ball at the bag but should be 3-4 feet in front of the bag.
 - Players should always have the ball in their throwing hand ready to throw, not in their glove.
 - Players should never throw across the baseline.

- Receiving fielder should give a big target.
- When making a tag, if possible have the ball in the glove with your throwing hand on the ball.

- HITTING AND DEFENSIVE ROUNDS - This drill works your hitters, base runners, and defensive players in a game-like situation with maximum efficiency? "Rounds" accomplishes all of these things. Align a defense on the field. A coach pitches, 3-4 players are the hitting/base running group. Three to Five rounds per group is ideal. A sample would be: Round 1 - runner on first hit and run. Round 2 - Runner on first sac bunt. Round 3 - Runner on second with 2 outs. Round 4 - Runners on first and second hit away. Round 5 - Runner on third squeeze. Hitters start with an 0-1 count always. This entire drill is done at GAME SPEED! Every pitch is a game-like situation. The hitting/base running group has tasks to accomplish on each pitch, and the defense must react accordingly to each hit ball and situation. >Drill Notes: The hitting/base running group follows the same order. If the round called for runner on first sac bunt, players 1 and 2 would be at first, 3 and 4 at the plate. After 3 bunts and 1 runs, 2 would be the next runner and 4 would be the next hitter. After the hitting/base running group finishes their rounds, they rotate into defense and a new group replaces them. You might have to play kids out of position once in awhile to make it work, but that's fine. Remember - make this as game-like as possible.

- INFIELD PRACTICE DRILL – BALL JUGGLING - An infield player stands in the ready position in the infield. The coach is about 15-20 feet away with 2 to 3 balls (1 in pocket). He throws a grounder and as the fielder is fielding the ball, he throws the second. The fielder must concentrate on making a good throw back to the coach and at the same time pick up the location of the second ball, field it cleanly, and throw it back. The coach should pick up the pace and move the fielder from side to side until they miss. The third ball is for if the coach drops a ball he has another to keep the drill going longer.

- IS IT BALL #1 OR BALL #2? - How many times do players, especially young ones, pull up too fast on a grounder in anticipation of making the throw to first only to leave the ball back on the ground or bobbling it because they have taken their eye off the ball. This drill helps teach the players to look the ball into their glove before they set and throw to a base. Since they have to read the number on the ball, they learn to pick it up and handle it first before throwing it. It also helps teach reacting and throwing to different bases. Players line up between third base and shortstop position facing a thrower at home. There is one player at first

base and one at second base. The thrower has 12-24 balls with either #1 or #2 written on the ball. The thrower rolls a ball to infielder who fields the ball and reads the number on the ball. If ball = #1, throw goes to first base. First baseman throws to second base. Second basemen runs the ball to the bucket that is at the shortstop position. The players rotate while ball is being put in the bucket (fielder goes to first, first baseman goes to second, and second baseman goes to end of line). Once the ball is put in the bucket, the next ball is rolled. If ball = #2, throw goes to second base, second throws to first, first throws back to second and second baseman runs ball to bucket as the players rotate again. Each time throw is made, player must tag base before next throw is made. Wild throws must be retrieved and the base tagged before the throw to the next base is made. Any of the three players can retrieve wild throws but the ball must go back to proper base before next throw. The drill can be turned into a competition by splitting up into teams and simultaneously conducting the drill (other team starts in between home and first and throw to third for #1 and home for #2) or timing each team on how long it takes them to complete 12-24 balls. Emphasis should be put on setting the feet to throw to the proper base and that making good throws will avoid lost time chasing after wild throws. As players advance, make sure proper footwork for tagging a base and throwing to the next base is taught.

- PERFECTION GAME - This drill makes infielding fun and competitive and puts the players in pressure situations. Put your infielders in their positions with 2 players at each spot. Rule is you must make play correctly and make good throw. If you don't do everything right, everyone on your infield team does push-ups and the next group goes.
 - Start with infield in and come to plate for force.
 - Next is infield in with runner on third.
 - Next is regular depth, nobody on.
 - Next is runner on first.
 - Next is runners on first and second.
 - Finally, move infield deep with nobody on.

You can allow for balls to be blocked as long as when they pick it up, they immediately throw it and don't pump it in their gloves.

If they do make a mistake, you start all over with that team on the step they were on. The team that loses does sit-ups while the others go home.

- **THREE BAG** - This drill enables your infielders to get maximum reps on ground balls and throwing to first, in a short period of time. "Three Bag" is perfect. This drill is designed for 60' bases. Adjust accordingly for 90' bases. This drill utilizes three First Bases. Place a throw down base approximately 40' from home plate, next is the regular base at 60', then place a third bag 20' farther down the line. 3 coaches are positioned near home plate with a bucket of balls. One coach hits grounders to the third baseman (he throws to the bag at 40'). Another coach hits to the SS (he throws to the normal first base bag). The third coach hits to the second baseman (he throws to the bag at 80') It may sound confusing, and a lot is going on with three coaches hitting grounders at the same time, but a tremendous amount gets accomplished. Each infielder will get numerous ground balls and throws across the diamond.
- **THE PIT** - This game is similar to the Point game, but this game is an individual competition. Have each player take a turn in the Pit. The Pit is an 8-10 feet horizontal span area up against any type of wall surface. Have each player take a turn in the Pit receiving a ground ball. If the any ball gets past the player in the Pit, within the span area, then he or she is out of the game. For the player who field the ground ball cleanly and makes an accurate throw back to the coaches hitting, make the ground balls faster and tougher. We usually use a soft baseball in case the ball is missed (the ball then goes directly off the wall and back towards the player) and in situations where the players are fielding cleanly and the balls are starting to come faster.
- **POINT** - Split your team up into an A and B team. Have the A team spread out between second and third base and the B team spread out between second base and first base. Once this is accomplished, have a coach (from home plate) hit ground balls to each teams side. If a ball gets through on either side of the infield and makes it to the outfield grass, then that team receives a point. First team with ten points losses. Kids love this game and are really aggressive (diving) going after the ball. This game also teaches kids the importance of backing up one another when fielding a ground ball.
- **BARE HAND** – Start working from the setup position, with no glove, and roll the ball to the fielder, who, in turn, moves to the ball, plays through it, and throws to his target.
- **GOLF BALL DRILL** – Hit golf balls, not at high speed, but where the player has to work on getting the short hop and being aggressive going for the ball.

- FAST, SLOW, FAST – This is the approach to ground balls that we emphasize. Fast to the ball, slow down as you breakdown, then fast again in your footwork to throw. BE QUICK BUT DON'T HURRY!

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First-baseman Drills/Basics

- Do not stretch before the ball is thrown. Stretch as you are receiving the ball.
- First find the bag and then look at the fielder receiving the ball.
- Use only the inside corner of the bag.
- If throw is wild your first responsibility is to stop the ball, not stay on the bag,
- If ball is in the dirt, get down on one knee and block the ball.
- Give a big target to the fielder
- RECEIVING THROWS AT FIRST BASE – Coach stands near short top. First-baseman plays in normal position. When the coach says go, the player finds the bag and the coach throws the ball. Coach should vary the throws right on the base, in the dirt, high, and wide.
- PITCHER COVER FIRST – Coach stands at home and rolls a ground ball to the second-base side of the first-baseman. He fields the ball and throws to the pitcher covering first base. This can be done with a live runner.

Catcher Drills

Things to cover with catchers

- pick-off plays to each base
 - pitch-outs and pick offs to first and second
 - giving signs with man on second.
 - With man on first and third and a called third strike, if runner on first steals automatically throw him out.
 - With bases loaded and two outs, and hitter strikes out and catcher does not catch the ball, just step on home plate for the third out.
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- BLOCKING WILD PITCHES – Coach stands 30 feet from home plate and throws balls into the dirt in front of the catcher.
 - THROWS TO BASES – Coach stands at the pitchers mound and pitches to the catcher who throws to different bases.
 - RECEIVING THROWS AT HOME AND BLOCKING THE PLATE.
 - FIELDING BUNTS – The coach stands behind the catcher and lops the ball in front of the catcher in the area that bunts would fall. The catcher fields the ball and throws to first base.
 - FIELDING POP-UPS – The catcher in full gear crouches behind the plate. The coach stands in the position of a batter and throws fly balls up for the catcher.
 - FIELDING PASS BALLS/WILD PITCHES – The coach is on the mound and throws wild pitches back to the screen. The catcher goes and gets the ball and throws to the pitcher (a player) covering home. You can do this with a runner on third.
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- SHADOW BLOCKING (NO BALL) - Coach stands behind the catcher. Catcher assumes their stance. The coach tells the catcher what pitch is thrown and where. The coach will give the catcher a few seconds to get ready. When the coach claps their hands, the catcher will assume the blocking position and hold. The coach or other players will check their form to make sure the catcher is in a good position. The drill can be varied by giving the catcher less time between pitch and location and the clap, or the catcher will go on verbal commands only.
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- SIT AND GET HIT - Coach gets on one knee from a short distance. The catcher assumes the blocking position. The coach will throw the ball in the dirt and off the chest of the catcher. The catcher gets the feeling of balls coming off their body.
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- MEDIUM TOSS - Coach stands halfway between the mound and home plate. The catcher assumes their stance. Coach will throw balls in the dirt and the catcher will block, retrieve, and get their body in a position to throw.

- STANDARD TOSS - Coach stands on the mound. The catcher assumes their stance. Coach will throw balls in the dirt and the catcher will block, retrieve, and get their body in a position to throw.
- UP-DOWNS - Lay out five balls five feet apart. The catcher will shuffle to each ball, assume the blocked position, get up and shuffle to the next ball. The object is to work on quickness down to the ball and up from the ball. Make sure the catcher's hands are moving in the correct position on the way up. The drill can be varied by having the catcher not only go down all five, but moving to the other side and returning to where they started.
- HANDS DRILL - The catcher should start in the down position with a ball placed in front of them. When the coach says go, the catcher fires their hands out to the side and away from the ball, gets to their feet quickly, rakes in the ball and gets their body in a position to throw the baseball.
- ZONE BLOCKING - Acceptable activity for when practice is getting monotonous and the catchers need a change of pace. Assign three zones and points for each (5, 3, -5). The first zone should be 3 feet by 3 feet starting at the catchers feet, the second zone should be 5 feet by 5 feet starting at the catchers feet, the third zone is anything outside zone two. Catcher assumes stance while the coach stands on the mound. The coach will throw balls in the dirt. The catcher should block, retrieve the balls in a zone and then get their body in a position to throw. Each catcher gets an established number of trials. Add up points and assign a winner.
- FLINCH - The catcher assumes the ready position. A coach or another player stands 2 feet in front of the catcher with a ball in each hand. With a flick of the wrist, one ball is thrown directly at the catcher's mask. At the same time, the coach/player lobs the other ball into the air. The catcher locates the pop-up and catches it with two hands. The ball also can be thrown away from the catcher to work on diving catches. It can also be used to work on foul balls close to the fence. This is a great drill for young catchers but will work for older catchers also. The catchers must learn to trust their equipment and not pull their heads back and leave their throats exposed (which is a very common and dangerous error on the part of young catchers). They must also learn to keep their eyes on the ball when it comes off the bat or skips off the dirt.

- GLOVE TO THE BALL - KNEES TO THE GLOVE - The two primary skills for catchers are blocking and throwing effectively. These two skills take the longest to develop, and therefore are the two we spend the most time working on. I would like to share our techniques for developing blocking skills. The basic process cue is: "Glove to the ball - knees to the glove". The difficulty is that most try to do it the opposite way. The teaching process is this;

1. In a catcher's stance, no glove, 3 balls arranged in a shallow triangle. The first ball is dead center behind the plate, the second to the right and forward, the third to the left and forward. Balls 2 and 3 are even with each other. Catcher falls forward to the ball on his hands, then brings both knees to his hands. Do this with each of the balls, emphasizing that the angle of the body must deflect the ball onto home plate.

2. In a stance, with glove. Catcher puts glove to the ball, then brings knees to the glove. Do with each ball position 'til the move comes easy.

3. Full gear, throw soft balls (tennis or indoor balls). Catcher blocks by glove to ground/ball then knees to ball. We are short tossing at this point.

4. Full distance soft-ball toss. Same process.

5. Hard balls, short throws.

6. Full distance throws medium speed to called area.

7. Full distance throw hard to called area.

8. Full distance throws to varied areas.

- FIELDING BUNTS

1. Three ball. - Place one ball near the first base line, one up the middle, and one near the third base line. Catcher will assume their stance. Coach will stand behind and call out which ball to field. Catcher will attack the ball, field it, and make a strong and accurate throw to a base.

2. Over the shoulder toss. - Catcher will assume their stance. Coach will stand behind the catcher with a ball. The coach will toss the ball over the catchers shoulder. The catcher will field it and throw to a base. A variation that can be used is telling the catcher that the runner has

great speed and they must hurry. Also, the coach can throw it far enough that a throw to first would be late. The catcher will execute a full arm fake and throw out the lead runner who may have drifted off a base.

- **THROWING FOOTWORK**

1. **Catcher with ball.**

The catcher starts out with the ball in their glove. Coach will be in front of the catcher. The coach will instruct the catcher to use either load and throw or jump pivot. The catcher will execute the footwork and throw to a partner. Make sure to work both methods of throwing footwork.

2. **One knee partner/coach toss.**

Catcher at home plate. Partner or coach a few feet in front on one knee. Partner or coach will toss ball to catcher who is already in their stance. The catcher will catch the ball and execute proper throwing footwork and throw to another partner. Being on one knee and tossing the ball will allow the partner or coach to put the ball exactly where they want to work. Also, this will assist the catcher in working on both types of throwing footwork.

3. **Medium/Full toss.**

Coach will stand halfway or on the mound and throw pitches to the catcher who has already assumed their stance. The catcher will execute footwork determined by the pitch and throw to a partner behind the coach.

Outfield

BASICS

- Review proper footwork technique
- Going back on ball - Drop-step first, then crossover step (if the ball is hit over your head).
- Catch the ball while you are coming in toward the infield, so your momentum is toward the infield not away from it.
- Throw the ball to the cut-off man. Never hold the ball in the outfield!
- Line Drives Above the Waist - Catch the ball with your hands and fingers pointed up.
- Line Drives Below the Waist - Catch the ball with your hands and fingers pointed down.

DRILLS

FIELDING GROUND BALLS DRILL – Hit ground balls with both options

- Drop to one knee - It's the safest way to catch, but it takes the longest. It keeps the ball in front of you. This is the method we will use with no one on base.
- The "do-or-die" - Only use this technique in game-saving situations like the last inning with the tying or winning run at second base. You scoop the ball up on the run and come up throwing.
- OVER THE SHOULDER CATCH DRILL - The purpose of this drill is to improve the player's ability to catch a fly ball over the shoulder. The drill can have as many tossers as desired. The drill can have 4 or more players in each line. Each player has a ball. The tosser stands on the left side of the player. The player hands the ball to the tosser, then runs out, and the tosser leads with a fly ball so that the player has to reach to catch the ball over the left shoulder. After catching or retrieving the ball, the player turns to the left, and jogs back to the end of the line.
- SHORT-DISTANCE FLY BALLS – Player takes one step in, coach throws either a ball in front, a ball behind, a ball to glove side, a ball to arm side. Player catches the ball and showing proper footwork throws to a cut-off man.
- SCISSORS DRILL – player does running in place, coach throws a ball to 4 different spots, in front of player, behind player, to the right, to the left. Each time player catches it and using good technique throws to a cut-off man.
- ZIG – ZAG DRILL – Player starts about 10 feet from the coach. The coach throws a ball approximately 10 feet behind him to his left. The player runs under the ball returning it to a second coach off to the side. The first coach immediately throws a second ball over the other shoulder of the player. The player again catches it and throws to the second coach. Repeat until the player is out of range.
- THE REBOUND DRILL - Have the players form a single line, the first person becomes the fielder and a coach or the second person in line throws the ball

past the fielder up against the fence. The play is made, then the second person in line becomes the fielder and the original fielder goes to the end of the line.

- BALLS IN THE SUN DRILL - Hit fly balls into the sun teaching the players to use their glove to shield the ball.
- RELAY DRILL - Hit fly balls to the outfielder and have them show proper throwing technique to an infielder who is the cut-off. (Throw should go to the glove-side of the infielder.
- MAJOR LEAGUE FLY DRILL – Hit fly balls as high as you can or use a tennis racquet to hit tennis balls.
- INCOMING LINE DRIVES - A very difficult play for outfielders is charging and catching a screaming line drive. Depending on the spin of the ball, the ball may dive, sail, or even knuckle. As an outfielder approaches a low line drive, it is often advantageous to slide to keep the ball closer to eye level. To execute this drill, the coach takes a knee with a bucket of balls directly in front of him. The outfielders are lined up about 30 feet out in front of the coach. On the coaches 'go' signal, the first player sprints to you and begins a slide (to your side), just before they reach you. A slide here is identical to a slide into a base... feet first with one leg tucked under. As the player begins to slide, the coach should toss a ball into the air (straight up, 2 to 3 feet) to your side. The player is then to slide underneath the ball and make the catch.
- OH-MAN! - This is a combination drill. The drill works on position for the fly ball, footwork, throwing, picking up the ball in flight, speed, hitting the cutoff, and throwing accuracy. The drill starts with a coach, a bucket of balls (at least 8), a catcher, and a cutoff man (Coaches may fill in these roles also). The rest of the players line up at or close to the outfield fence (usually left center or right center). The cutoff man goes to his regular position (ss or 2nd). The object is for the outfielder to actually place the ball in the catchers glove at home plate with out making a single miscue of either throwing or catching. The key is accuracy of the coach that is hitting with the fungo. The coach will hit/or throw the first ball in the air high and long. The player should not have to move much. The player uses proper technique in catching then throws the ball to the cutoff man. Before the ball has left the fielders hand, the coach will throw another ball (throws or hits it), but this time it is not quite so high and shorter in length. Now the player must be on the move to catch the ball. Again, after he catches the ball, he must hit the cutoff man and continue moving towards home plate. Once again, before the ball leaves the fielder hands, another ball is on the way being a line drive or a short hop. Determined by the player's position on the field, the player fields the ball and throws to either the catcher or the cutoff man. The player needs to keep moving toward the catcher at the highest rate of

speed, but yet still under control. The coach keeps hitting ground balls to the player and now the player should be on the dirt infield and throwing the ball to the catcher, still moving forward until he places it in the catcher's glove.

This drill can be modified for strict or lenient guidelines as to throwing accuracy. But, if the player misses just one ball...then to the back of the line and "OH-MAN" he/she has to do it again.

The drill is fun and the kids enjoy it. As the kids get better (and the coaches hitting accuracy) we hit balls faster and harder and tighten up the guidelines to throwing accuracy.

- TAG-UP THROW DRILL - This teaches the outfielder the proper step forward as he catches the ball as well as practice the correct fundamentals of throwing. Procedure: Put a runner on second or third base. The outfielders will be in their outfield positions and coach stands behind second base throwing fly balls in all directions and telling them what the situation is and where the throws should go. The outfielders should try to attempt to get behind the ball with their drop-step and throw to the right base. Remember, if he throws with his right hand he will be stepping forward with his right foot as he catches the ball and vice-versa if he is left-handed. This drill provides the necessary momentum and arm-leg coordination needed to make the throw strong and accurate without wasting too much time with additional steps.
- THE BOUNCE- This is used to develop the outfielders ability to throw low and put the correct backspin on the ball and to throw overhand. Procedure: The outfielders can pair-off and face each other about 100-125 feet apart. Each pair has ball to bounce back and forth to each other to see who can get the longest bounce. Remember to have them check their throws, if the ball goes left or right after the bounce, they are not throwing overhand or keeping their fingers on top of the ball. They want to achieve backspin on the ball. As they develop, they can gradually move out to about 175-200 feet.
- FOOTBALL - I will usually end a practice with a game of "Football". I split the players into 2 teams and line them up about 10 feet apart with myself in the middle, and a coach (or parent) on the outside of each line.

I will have each line alternate having a player back-peddle about 25-30 feet, where I will then throw a pop up to either side of the player. If they

catch the ball, they get 2 points. As soon as they catch the ball, they have to set themselves and make a perfect throw to the coach on their side. If the throw is good, they get an additional point. I will run them through this 3 times each, alternating the lines.

Then I will have them run back on an angle (instead of back-peddling), and throw the ball to either side of them, forcing them to adjust. The same point system is used.

The players have fun with this drill, and it helps them get used to judging fly balls, and making good throws to the cut-off man.

Pitching

PITCHING GAME SIMULATION DRILL – Chart 30-40 pitches based on location (see attached chart). Pitcher gets a score for each pitch from 1-5. Keep track of all pitchers scores each week on a chart and post them for all to see.

Things to Cover with Pitchers

- Covering first on hit to left side
- Covering on past balls
- Intentional walks
- Appeal plays
- Covering bunts
- Pitching signs including pitch outs and pick off plays
- Pick-off plays to each base

Holding Runners on Base

- Pick-off plays to each base.
- Pick-off plays to second (Kreider, Smucker, signs from catcher)
- Pick-off play to first with runners on first and second with firstbaseman not holding runner on.
- Signs from catcher with runners on second.