

SAMPLE PRACTICE PLAN #1

5:00 - 5:10

Warm-up – Two laps around the field (they need to break a sweat) followed by stretching.

5:10 - 5:15

Throwing

- Always catch with two hands.
- Receive the ball over the throwing shoulder.
- Move feet to receive the ball correctly (do not allow the girls to be lazy)
- Start throwing at a close distance, then move further apart.

5:15 - 6:00

Position Practice

Separate players into groups - infielders, outfielders, pitchers and catchers. All four groups are working out at the same time.

Infielders start with ground balls drill:

Partner ground ball

- Pair the girls up
- Stand about 20 feet apart
- One partner rolls the ball to the other partner
- The ball is fielded with proper mechanics

Important tips for fielding ground balls:

- Feet a little more than shoulder width apart.
- Weight on balls of feet. (Softball is not played on your heels.)
- Field balls as far out in front of you as possible.
- Always field ball in front of you - not off to either side.
- Look the ball into the glove. (Each partner should see the other partner's ponytail or top of head, when fielding a ball.)
- Don't just bend at waist when fielding, bend at waist and knees. (Thighs parallel to the ground)
- Cover up the ball with throwing hand when ball goes into glove.

Glove positioning - the back of glove should be on the ground when fielding - not the tips of the fingers of the glove. Give each partner at least 10 ground balls. The key is to field properly. This drill is not a race and doing it 10 times the right way is better than 100 times the lazy, wrong way.

Hit Ground Balls - Goal here is to get lots of grounders while fielding properly.

Lots o' balls

- Put all middle infielders at SS. Put all corners at 3B.
- Hit a ball to SS.
- Hit a ball to 3B.
- After player fields the ball she should throw ball back to hitter (not a hard throw) and rotate to end of line.
- Continue this cycle until each player receives at least 7 ground balls.

This provides players with lots of grounders quickly without taxing their throwing arm. Here's another drill:

Live fielding with throws to all bases

- Position players in the infield.
- Hit grounders to each position-throw to 1B.
- Hit grounders to each position-throw to 2B.
- Keep going with throws to 3B and Home.
- Repeat cycle.
- Most throws in a game go to 1B, so make sure lots of throws go to 1B.

Outfielders

Fly balls

- Put outfielders in the outfield.
- Hit fly balls to the 1st player in line.
- She should rotate to the end of the line.
- Repeat the cycle.

Tips for catching fly balls:

- Always call for the ball at least 3 times "ball, ball, ball"
- Always catch with two hands.
- Catch the ball over throwing shoulder.
- Catch ball at or just above forehead level.
- Catch ball on left foot (if player is right handed or vice versa) with weight coming forward - this will help when teaching the crow-hop later.

Ground balls

There are three ways to field ground balls in the outfield: safety, triangle, or do or die. The player should use the safety method when there is a base hit, but there will be no play made at a base. The purpose is to make sure the ball is fielded in front of the outfielder without bobbling the ball.

Mechanics of the Safety:

- Charge the ball under control.
- When the ball is about 3 feet away, the outfielder will place right knee on ground (assuming the player is right handed) with the right foot placed in the direction of her shoulder not with foot behind her.
- She wants to get as big as possible, just in case the ball takes a bad hop.
- Ball should be fielded in front of body - not to the side.
- Weight should be forward with shoulders square to the field.
- Look the ball in (remember ponytail).
- Cover ball up with throwing hand.
- Don't go down to knee too soon or the ball may take a bad hop and get by the outfielder. (We all know that most of the outfields we play on are not very smooth.)

The Triangle should be used when there is a base hit with a possibility of a play at a base.

Mechanics of the Triangle:

- Charge the ball under control.
- Field the ball just as an infielder would field it. (Go back to Infield Tips.) I call it the Triangle because the player will have three points of contact on the ground forming a triangle: two feet forming the base and the glove forming the point.

The "Do or Die" is hardly ever used. This is when the ball has to get to the plate very quickly or the winning run will score. Hence - get an out (Do) or lose (Die).

Mechanics of Do or Die:

- Charge the ball hard.
- The ball will be fielded on the run.
- Field the ball outside the left foot (again, assuming the player is right handed)
- She wants to scoop the ball into her glove and fire it home.

This is a very hard technique to perform, so do not emphasize this play. Only in special cases should this be used. Make sure you explain the different scenarios to your players. The outfield conditions will also dictate the way the girls should field the ball. If the field is just plain awful, maybe only the Safety should be used. Maybe you are lucky enough to play on an awesome outfield and all three methods can be taught and used. Don't forget to take into account the weather, sprinkler heads, big holes, wind, rain, etc. Fly balls and all three types of fielding ground balls should be practiced every day.

Communication

Communication is very important in the outfield. Someone needs to call for the ball and someone has to back up the play.

- Put outfield into 2 groups. Centerfield needs to be one of the groups.
- Remind players that Centerfield has priority over everyone. If she calls for the ball first - then it is hers. Other line backs up.
- The back up should be at least 15 - 20 feet in back of fielder.
- The fielder should call for the ball 3 times "mine, mine, mine"
- The other fielder lets her teammate know that she heard her by saying "yours", then she proceeds to back her up.
- Encourage your outfielders to call for the ball as soon as they realize it is theirs. That way their teammates have time to back them up.
- On a fly ball do not call the ball on its upward track because the wind may take it somewhere the player does not expect. Call the ball at its pinnacle.

Pitchers and Catchers

The Pitchers pitch to the Catchers. Remember that velocity should come before control. The Catcher can work on framing and blocking while catching. When the Pitchers and Catchers are done working out, rotate them in with either the Infield or the Outfield.

6:00

Water break

6:05 – 6:30

Hitting and Bunting

Hitting takes some major organization. You have 12 players with ½ hour left. Pair up your players. You need 6 stations to keep them all busy. With ½ hour you have 5 minutes per station. But, don't forget

clean up time. So use 4 or 4½ minutes to keep yourself on time. Here are some stations:

- T Station (batting T)
 - a. Outside T
 - b. Inside T
 - c. "Meat" T (down the middle)
- Soft Toss - one person hitting into net or fence and partner tossing balls from the side.
- Soft Toss on one knee (concentrate on upper body.)
- T on one knee (concentrate on upper body.)
- Shadow Drill - Player stands so her shadow is somewhere in her sight. Place a ball on the head of her shadow. Get into stance (make sure ball is on head of shadow), swing, look at your shadow. Is the ball still on the head of your shadow? It should be!!
- Ball Bouncing Drill - Player gets a ball. Using a bat, see how many times the player can bounce the ball into the air. Eye-hand coordination (this is a fun drill).
- Belly Button Drill - Player faces the fence. Place bat against belly button and fence (bat will be parallel to the ground). At that distance player should be able to swing without hitting the fence. This drill is good to make sure the swing is short and compact.
- Dry Cuts Drill - Player has a bat and the Coach talks them through a swing by saying "Trigger, Stride, Swing." Repeat.
- Coach Pitch Drill - Behind a screen, the Coach pitches to player about 20 feet away. Sling slot is fine. Get closer if needed.
- Shag Drill - Sometimes this is needed to keep things going (shag the hit balls).
- Hip Twist Drill - Place the bat behind your back, parallel to the ground. Hold it there with your arms. Put a T at the height of the bat head, swing, and concentrate on turning your hips - hit the bat off of the T.
- Blind Drill - Use whiffle balls. One partner hits, the other partner pitches. Batter closes eyes - partner is 15 - 20 feet away. At pitch release or right after (depending on the skill), the pitcher yells "open". The batter then finds the ball and hits it.

6:30

Cool down and summarize