

# *Town of Cary*



## *Youth Coaching Guide*

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# Effective Practice Planning

Developing an effective practice plan is very important for coaches to ensure they are prepared and make effective use of their time. It is difficult to come up with something off the top of your head for every practice, to keep it fun, to keep everyone on the field happy and still have them learn the game of baseball. One of the best ways to run a smooth practice that teaches skills is having players compete. This also provides players with an enjoyable experience. Good practices happen by having a plan and primary focus for every practice.

Having a practice plan is a great way to take the pressure off you and your other coaches and helpers. The plan will provide your players with a more structured practice with instruction, interaction and competition. The Town of Cary has created practice plans for both Pre-season and In-season to aid your practice preparation. The different practice plans will address many different areas of the game of baseball but focus on the basic fundamentals of the game. You will find an explanation of the drills in the practice plans in this coach's manual.

These drills can be modified to suit your team's needs. The practice plans are also just a guideline for you. Once you go through a few of the practice plans, you are probably going to pick a few that you like the best and go with those. However you choose to use them, we hope that they come in handy when you teach your players the game of baseball. Due to the limited amount of practice time, the practice plans do not have water breaks built in but we would encourage you to allow players to get water frequently.

## Here are a few tips to running a good practice:

- **Have and use a Practice Plan**
- **Instruct the players on all techniques involved in a drill**
- **Include fun things like competitions or games to break up constant instruction – after all, they should have fun!**
- **Don't criticize but teach and instruct. Players respond much better to instruction than criticism.**
- **Keep the practice flowing, but include time for warm up, cool down and breaks for water.**
- **Run different stations that build on player skills. This gives players more repetition and increases their skill sets.**

**Note:** When running stations, use as many coaches and parents as you have available so you can cover as much as possible and keep the groups smaller. You could even use two of the practice plans at one practice if you have the available help. You will give the players more repetition by breaking the players into smaller groups, this will keep the players active and interested.

**Be a Student of the Game!!**

# Hitting

## Introduction

What is it that makes some hitters so consistent and others so frustrated at the plate? There are several absolutes that all good hitters must have. All hitters must have good balance and be able to create bat speed. As a coach, you will need to spend a lot of your time working with your hitters on balance. Staying on balance from the start to the finish of the swing will allow hitters the best chance to be successful. Many young hitters develop bad habits early in their playing days. There are several contributing factors ... poor balance, incorrect hitting mechanics or fundamentals and using the wrong size bat are a few major factors. It is important for young players to use the right bat. The instruction and drills in the manual have been tested and used by players and coaches at many different levels. They are designed to help improve balance, concentration, and overall hitting ability. It is better to take 10 perfect swings than hundreds of incorrect swings. Baseball is a game of muscle memory. It's all about the Quality and not Quantity. If the player isn't doing a skill correctly, he is just creating bad habits.

**Practice Doesn't Make Perfect ... Perfect Practice Makes Perfect ... Practice Only Makes Permanent!!**

## What is the Key to Hitting?

**Balance ... All good hitters have the ability to stay on balance from the start to the finish of their swings!**



**Spread and Flexed**

## Hitting Absolutes

- Must stay on Balance from the start to the finish of the swing.
- Hitting is like building a house ... it starts from the ground and must have a good foundation.
- Must minimize head movement to minimize the movement of the eyes.
- Must have a little pre-pitch movement with the hands. A body in motion tends to stay in motion.
- Hips take the hands to the ball. Short compact swing.

- Must keep hands inside the ball. This allows the hitter to generate bat speed.
- The front foot must be down before you can start the swing. Can't hit with front foot in the air.
- Grip the bat out in the fingers. Line the door knocking knuckles up.

## Fallacies and Faults

- “Get Your Back Elbow UP”... We've heard this all our lives but no one knows who started it ... this isn't the best information for hitter. Elbows should be loose and relaxed in a good comfortable position. Door knocking knuckles lined up allow the elbows to be in a good position.
- You Stride to Generate Power so Take a Big Stride. No ... The Stride is for Timing. You don't even have to stride. Watch Albert Pujols hit. He doesn't stride. He just does a little inward rotation followed by an outward explosion.
- Stride where the ball is pitched. No ... if you stride.... it should be early and soft (foot lands on egg shells) ... stride right back to the pitcher ... never to the ball.
- Grip the bat tight. No ... tight grip means tight muscles ... tight muscles are slow muscles.
- The bigger and heavier the bat ... the farther I can hit. No ... too heavy a bat will prevent the hitter from generating bat speed and can create bad habits.
- 2 Strikes – Guard the plate. No ... you're on Offense ... Offense doesn't Guard anything ... Offense attacks. Teach your hitters to be aggressive.

## Hitting Faults or Problems:

- Back elbow up – elbow above the hands
- Taking too big of a stride
- Striding to the ball vs back to the pitcher
- Not hitting from an athletic position – standing too straight up and down
- Wrapping the bat behind the head – makes for a very long swing
- Choking the bat in the palms of the hands
- Gripping the bat too tight – tight muscles are slow muscles
- Long swings – casting the hands
- Too much head movement
- Eyes – many problems are caused by the eyes ... not level, not looking at the pitcher with both ...etc.

## Examples of Hitting Faults



Back Elbow to High



Feet too close together



Bat wrapped behind the head



## The Grip



The proper grip is to align the door knocking knuckles up. This will keep the bat out in the fingers where we're stronger. With the proper grip, the 2 pointer fingers will point straight ahead.



Improper alignment will cause the 2 fingers to point opposite direction. This will cause the hitter to choke the bat in the palms of his hands and cause the elbows to come up.

## The Stance

The beginning of a balanced swing requires the hitter to have a solid foundation or stance. Starting from the ground up, the following is a simple way for players to learn how to start in a balanced stance:

<b>Feet</b>	Spread about twice shoulder width
<b>Toes</b>	Straight ahead and weight on the balls of feet; never on the heels
<b>Ankles &amp; Knees</b>	Slight bend or Flexed
<b>Waist</b>	Slight bend
<b>Shoulders</b>	Front shoulder level or slightly down
<b>Grip</b>	Door knocking knuckles lined up
<b>Hands</b>	Off the back shoulder and approximately 4 - 6 inches away from the chest.
<b>Elbows</b>	Lose and Relaxed, Slightly Down at approximately a 45 degree angle
<b>Bat</b>	Approximately a 45 degree angle
<b>Eyes</b>	Both eyes looking at the pitcher



**Spread and Flexed  
Athletic Position**



**Elbows loose and relaxed**



## Hips and Hands

The hips take the hands to the ball. The bat barrel should stay above the hands. The top hand should control the direction of the bat head. If the bottom hand controls the bat head, it will be a slow and looping swing. The bat barrel should level or flatten out in the hitting zone. Teach hitters to fire the hips to generate power.



Hips take the hands to the ball



## Point of Contact

At the point of contact, hitters should be on balance and in the following position with their bodies:

<b>Back Toe</b>	Pointed at the pitcher
<b>Back Knee</b>	Pointed at the pitcher
<b>Belly Button</b>	Pointed at the Pitcher
<b>Eyes</b>	Looking at the point of contact
<b>Front Foot</b>	Weight on the ball of foot and no more than 45 degree open



Back foot pivot and Pointing at the pitcher



Back Knee and Belly Button at the pitcher



Eyes at Contact and Front Foot Closed



## The Finish

Perfect mechanics also require a balanced finish. The following descriptions are the ideals for the finish of the swing.

<b>Back Toe</b>	Pointed at the pitcher
<b>Back Knee</b>	Pointed at the pitcher

<b>Belly Button</b>	Pointed at the Pitcher
<b>Back Shoulder</b>	Replaces the front shoulder
<b>Eyes</b>	Looking at the point of contact

## Examples of the Perfect Finish



**Back foot pivot, front foot closed.**



**Belly Button to the pitcher and eyes at contact**



**Finish on Balance**

## Hitting Drills

### Every Hitter Needs to Know the Basics

Professional baseball players spend many hours hitting in the cage working off a tee. They work on their swing in the on deck circle and they get coaching on the fundamentals of hitting daily. This can be applied to any level of baseball. The more difficult drills are not the only thing older and more experienced players do. They constantly work on the basic fundamentals to maintain their swing. Young players need to work on proper hitting mechanics as they create muscle memory and a perfect swing.

### Here are some tips for hitting drills (at any level):

- Repetition is the key to hitting. Practice doesn't make perfect, *perfect* practice makes perfect ... practice only makes *permanent*. Repetition needs to be watched carefully so players don't develop any bad habits.
- In the early stages of teaching hitting, proper instruction is also important. Learning the proper stance, swing path and follow through is so important to allow players to hit as they get older.
- Hitting requires patience and practice. Teaching contact and correct form will benefit players' games for many years to come.

## Drill #1

### Lower Half

This drill will help the hitter understand how their lower body needs to work to maintain balance during the swing to the finish. Teach your players to hit from a Spread and Flex position. This will give them better balance.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** This can be done with the entire team or individually. Try it during stretching. No equipment is needed.

**How this drill works:** The coach calls out “stance” and all of the players will get into a spread and flexed position (slight bend at the ankle, knees and waist) and their hands on their waist. The coaches will then go through the line of players and make sure each player is in a good balanced position. Then the coach will say “finish” and all players will fire their hips and go to the finish position and hold. We are working on creating muscle memory.



Spread and Flexed



Fire the hips and stay on balance

**Results:** The repetition alone will be good for the younger players. If a player has a poor foundation, he will never be as good a hitter as he would like to be. Teach your players that you build a house from the ground up (strong foundation) and you build a stance from the ground up (strong foundation).

## Drill #2

### Lower Half / Balance Beam

This drill will help the hitter understand how their lower body needs to work to maintain balance during the swing to the finish. Teach your players to hit from a Spread and Flex position. This will give them better balance.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Balance Beam

**How this drill works:** The hitter will work on the Balance Beam and work on their Balance. The hitter will spread and flex with their hands on hips on the balance beam. They will rotate on the back foot to the perfect finish and hold. As the hitter masters the lower half balance drill, add the hands and take a dry swing and hold the finish.



Balance Beam



Spread and Flexed



Pivot on the back foot

**Results:** The repetition alone will be good for the younger players. The stance is one of the most important elements in creating balance during the swing. By learning the right stance, it sets up a great foundation for solid batting in the future. Teach your players that you build a house from the ground up and you build a stance from the ground up.

## Drill #3

### Batter stance

This drill can be used in different ways at different levels. It will be used to work on the fundamentals needed to help a player create the perfect stance. Players at all levels can use proper stance training. It should be used after the coach teaches players the proper hitting stance. Spread and Flex.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** This can be done as a station or with the entire team. Hitters, bats and helmets will be needed for the drill. Line the players up evenly spaced along the 1B or 3B line.

**How this drill works:** The coach will call out 'stance' and all of the players will get into their batting stance. The coaches will then go through the line of players and make any adjustments the first few times. After doing it several times, make it a competition. The coach will call 'stance' and if any of the players still need the same stance corrections, they are eliminated from the competition



Balanced Stance



Elbows Loose and Relaxed

**Results:** The repetition alone will be good for the younger players. The stance is one of the most important elements in creating balance during the swing. By learning the right stance, it sets up a great foundation for

solid batting in the future. Teach your players that you build a house from the ground up and you build a stance from the ground up.

## Drill #4

### Dry Swings

This drill will be used to help players to work on the perfect stance, swing path and a balanced finish.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** This drill can be done with or without a bat and as a small group station or the entire team.

**How this drill works:** Players setup in their stance in a balanced – spread and flexed position. Don't allow them to swing until they are setup in a proper stance. Take a slow controlled swing to the finish. Have the players hold their finish. Count to 3 to help create muscle memory.



Working on the perfect finish



Stay on Balance

**Results:** The repetition alone will be good for the younger players. The stance is one of the most important elements of creating balance during the swing. By learning a balanced stance, it sets up a great foundation for solid hitting in the future. Teach players that a house is built from the ground up and you build a hitting stance from the ground up.

## Drill #5

### Tee Hitting Drill

Tee hitting drill is an excellent way to teach young players the proper way to hit.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Set up a Tee in cage, Flip Net or on the Field. This drill is an individual or Group Hitting Drill.

**How this drill works:** Players should start from a balanced stance. Take a swing and hit the ball and hold their finish for 3 second. Coach should check for a perfect finish. The hitter will take 4 swings.

**Results:** Teach players the proper way to hit and stay on balance from the start to the finish of the swing. Stress to the hitters the importance of staying on balance from the start to the finish of the swing. Remind the hitter to stay in a spread and flex position.

## Drill #6

### Team Tee Hitting Drill and Run to 1B

This team Tee hitting drill is an excellent way to teach young players the proper way to hit and run to 1B.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Place a Tee at home plate. Have one hitter at a time take a swing, hit the ball, and run through 1B. Make sure you teach your players to run through 1B and not stop on the base.

**How this drill works:** Players should take a swing, hit the ball off the Tee and run to 1B. Have a coach at home to make sure the hitter starts from the balanced stance and a coach at first to ensure the player runs through 1B.

**Results:** Teach players the proper way to hit and stay on balance ... then how to get out of the batters box and run to first. Stress to the hitters the importance of staying on balance from the start to the finish of the swing. Remind the hitter to stay in a spread and flex position. The coach at first ensures the hitter runs through 1B and doesn't try to stop on the base.

## Drill #7

### Team Tee Hitting Drill and Run to 1B with Defense

This team Tee hitting drill is Drill #6 with the addition of a defense. This drill will be used to teach young players the proper way to hit and run to 1B against a defense.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Place a Tee at home plate and set a defense in the field.

**How this drill works:** The coach needs to divide players into 2 teams. Players should take a swing and run to 1B. Defense will try to get the hitter out at 1B. Make sure you teach your players to run through 1B and not stop on the base. Have a coach at home to make sure the hitter starts from the proper stance and the coach at first base will ensure the player runs through 1B.

**Results:** Teach players the proper way to hit and stay on balance ... then how get out of the batters box and run to first. Stress to the hitters the importance of staying on balance from the start to the finish of the swing. Remind the hitter to stay in a spread and flex position. The coach at first ensures the hitters run through 1B and don't try to stop on the base. Players on defense work on Ready position, PFP, proper footwork and throwing to the bases.

## Drill #8

### Team Tee Hitting Drill and Run to 1B with Defense and Runners

This team Tee hitting drill is Drill #6 with the addition of a defense and base runner. This drill will be used to teach young players the proper way to hit and run to 1B against a defense. The defense will work on proper fielding and throwing the hitter out.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Place a Tee at home plate and set a defense in the field.



**How this drill works:** The coach needs to divide players into 2 teams. Players should take a swing and run to 1B. Defense will try to get the hitter out at 1B. Make sure you teach your players to run through 1B and not stop on the base. Have a coach at home to make sure the hitter starts from the proper stance and the coach at first base will ensure the player runs through 1B. If the hitter is safe at 1B, the runner remains at 1B and runs to second on the next hit. Defense can try to get either runner out on the hit.

**Results:** Teach players the proper way to hit and stay on balance ... then how get out of the batters box and run to first. Stress to the hitters the importance of staying on balance from the start to the finish of the swing. Remind the hitter to stay in a spread and flex position. The coach at first ensures the hitter runs through 1B and doesn't try to stop on the base. Players on defense work on Ready position, PFP, proper footwork and where to throw the ball.

## Throwing

### What does it take to be a Good Baseball Player?

- Hit
- Run
- Field
- Throw

### Throwing and Running are the ones we work at the least. Why?

- We learn to throw like we learn to run ... we just pick up the ball and start throwing.
- We assume we know how to throw since we've done it all our life.
- Don't Play Fetch, Play Catch
- The better we play catch ... the better baseball we will play.

### “Championships Begin with Defense”

- Make a chart and record all bad throws that cost an extra base.
- After a few games, evaluate whether we need to work on throwing.

## The Two Components of Throwing

### Teaching Proper Throwing Mechanics

#### Mechanical

- Grip – 4 seam
- Balance – Good Athletic Position (GAP)
- Toe to instep - instep **MUST** be facing the person you are throwing to.
- Throw with your legs and let your arm come along for the ride.
- Work in a line - land on the ball of your front foot ... shoulder in line with your target.
- Lead arm closed and throwing fingers on top / thumb beneath the baseball ... they should see the back of their hand.



- Elbows should stay in front of shoulder - Keep a Bow...Lead arm at the target.
- Work in a line ... Step towards the Target .... Follow through and finish.

## Mental

- One bad throw leads to another bad throw.
- Players need to have a short memory.
- Coaches need to teach proper mechanics.
- Consistency in mechanics helps prevent mental mistakes in throwing.

## Three Things Necessary to be a Good and Accurate Thrower

- Create Momentum
- Front Shoulder to Your Target – Work in a straight line to your target
- Use Momentum and follow your throw

## Throwing Faults or Problems

- Stiff front leg – throwing over a fence.
- Improper weight shift – not getting head out over your front foot (80/20)
- Failing to finish the throw – lack of follow-through
- Front shoulder open due to poor or lazy lead arm action.
- Fingers behind the ball – Pushing
- Elbow too low
- Poor Lead or Glove Side Arm Action

## Examples of Poor Throwing Mechanics



Elbow too low



Fingers inside Elbow  
Pushing the ball



Poor Lead or Glove Side  
Arm Action

## Throwing Drills

During all throwing drills, teach the players to stay off the foul lines. Groundskeepers paint lines, are proud of them and don't want us to mess them up. Stand about 5 – 10 feet away from the line.

## Drill #1

### Four Seam Grip and Partner Flip

Teach the player to grip the ball across the horseshoe.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Gloves and balls

**How this drill works:** Partners face each other with shoulders square ... 6 - 8 feet apart. This can be done standing or on one knee but for youth players, I suggest doing it from a spread and flexed standing position. The ball should be held in a 4 seam grip and the glove should be in a place under the throwing elbow. The throwing elbow should be held at shoulder height. The partners should flip the ball and try to get backspin on the baseball. This drill should be used first as part of all warm up throwing.



Across the Horseshoe



Four Seam Grip



Elbow up shoulder height, flip and follow through

**Results:** Teach players the proper 4 seam grip, to keep the elbow up, proper flip and follow through with the wrist.

## Drill #2

### Throwing “T”

Proper throwing mechanics are one of the least taught parts of the game. Why? Everyone assumes a player can throw properly because they have been throwing things since they started walking! The problem is players don't understand how to throw *correctly* ... so they can't throw *accurately*.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Gloves and balls ... draw a “T” on the infield dirt.

**How this drill works:** Teach your players to start with their throwing (back) foot on the cross part of the “T.” This will put the player's insteps parallel to the person he is throwing to. The glove foot (front) should be on long line of the T ... stance a little wider than shoulders and the instep on the line. Have the players start with a proper “4” seam grip and in the position to throw. The lead arm should be up so that if the player had a watch on, he could see the time. As the player starts to throw, the glove foot should stay on the line, the lead arm should pull in to the player's side and the player will throw to their partner. The player should work in a line towards their partner. The player waiting to catch the ball should be in a spread and flexed position with 2 hands up to receive the ball.



**Body in correct alignment  
Lead arm up. Finger at the top**



**Throwing "T"**



**Player works on the  
Throwing "T"**



**Work in a Line to  
Target**

**Results:** Players learn the proper throwing mechanics. They will learn to work in a line in the direction of their target. Players learn to throw with their legs – not the arm. The arm goes along for the ride. They will work in a line with the glove side arm up. The lead arm elbow will pull in to the body as the hips rotate. Finish with the momentum going to the target.

## Drill #3

### Step and Throw

Players learn how to catch the baseball ... then step and line up to throw in a single movement.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Gloves and balls

**How this drill works:** Both players will get in the proper position to catch the ball. Player with the ball will step forward with his throwing side leg placing down in front of him perpendicular to the target. As he places his foot down he brings his back leg forward, swiveling his body as he does this, to get lined up in the correct throwing position. As he completes the step with his back leg, he will throw the ball. Remind the players that this is a continuation of the other throwing drills. This added step will often result in younger players not getting their back foot positioned perpendicular to the target. Make sure you watch the placement of the foot and that they still close to the body and point it toward the target.



**Fingers on Top / Thumb underneath / Lead Arm Up / Throw and Follow Through**

**Results:** Teach players the proper throwing position with the body. Players throw with their legs – not the arms. The arm goes along for the ride. As the throwing player steps and the front foot hits the ground, the fingers should be on top of the ball, thumb underneath, the throwing elbow shoulder high and throwing hand up. The player works in a line to his target, the glove side arm is up and pulls in to the body and the hips rotate. Finish with the momentum going to the target.

## Drill #4

### Line Relay

This is a fun team competition that helps players develop good footwork, a quick transfer of the ball from the glove to the hand, and a quick release.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Gloves, balls and cones.

**Setup:** 2 or more lines of equal teams. Space players equal distances apart ... approximately 25' is best. This distance can be more or less depending on the ability of the players. Start with a distance that will allow them to focus on footwork and transferring the ball, not running down an errant throw.

**How this drill works:** Start with the ball on the same side of the line. On your signal the player with the ball will throw the ball to the next player in line. The team will continue to throw it down the line from player to player. Once the ball is to the end of the line, the ball will be thrown back down the line to the start. First team to get the ball back to the start wins. Play the game a few times ... increasing the distance between the players each time.

Team 1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Team 2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

**Results:** Teach players the proper footwork and the way to execute a relay throw. Players should set up to catch the ball on their glove side (sideways ... throwing shoulder pointed to thrower). If the player catches glove side and throws, they won't need to spin around to throw to the next player. Spin around slows the relay throw down which will slow them down and in a game situation, this could allow a runner to be safe.

## Drill #5

### Long Toss

Long toss helps players build up arm strength.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Baseballs and gloves

**How this drill works:** After proper warm up, allow the players to start backing up and making longer throws. Encourage them to push themselves. This is a great way to increase their arm strength. Players continue to move back for as long 3 to 5 minutes. You can call it 60', 90' 120' drill (distance in feet). Adjust the distance based on the ability of your players. May need to do 20', 40' 60', etc.

**Results:** Long toss will help players increase their arm strength. Allow players to throw long and see how far they can throw. Make it a game or competition. It is very important that they use proper throwing mechanics. No rainbows ... throw line drives. Work in a line to the target and make sure they are following through to their target.

## Drill #6

### Long Toss / Back ‘em Up Game

Long toss to help players build up arm strength ... the game will teach players to compete.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Baseballs ... watch and cones if playing the game.

**Setup:** Two lines – Players paired up.

**How this drill works:** Each pair is a team competing against other pairs. Make sure all players have properly warmed up their arms. Players will start out a certain distance away. Set cones or the coach can be the marker to set the distance. Set the cones or the coach can step back about 3 - 5 yards to increase the throwing distance. He will continue to move back and the players throw the ball back and forth. Each player will make 1 throw each at each distance. If the ball doesn't hit the ground, the player on the side of the cones moves back to the next cone or even with the coach. Players continue to move back as long as the ball doesn't hit the ground. If the ball hits the ground, that player pair is out of that round. The team that is the farthest away with out dropping the ball wins the round. To make the game more difficult, have the player catching the ball anchor a foot the way a first baseman does when covering the base. If either player has to pull his foot to catch the ball, the team is out.

**Results:** Long toss will help the players increase their arm strength. Allow players to throw long ... they like to see how far they can throw. Make sure they use proper throwing mechanics. Work in a line to the target and follow through.

## Drill #7

### Quick Toss

This drill works on the players' quick hands and feet. Teach them to catch, transfer the ball to their throwing hand and throw back.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Ball, gloves, stopwatch, player pairs in two lines

**How this drill works:** Divide the players into as many groups of two as possible. If an uneven number of players are present use a coach to fill out the last group. Line up the players as if they were getting ready to throw to warm up about 10 – 15 feet apart. Make sure the players are spaced equal distance apart along each side of the area to allow room for safety. Each group will have a ball. The coach will say “GO” and start the stopwatch and each team begins throwing the ball back and forth as quickly as possible ... proper footwork is critical here. Each time a team completes one throw and catch they count one point. If the ball isn't caught, they don't get a point for that throw. Play the game for thirty seconds and then call “STOP.” Each team then gives its score. The team with the highest score wins and each of those two players gets one point. Then rotate to the left so that all teams are different. As soon as all teams are set and have a ball, start another round as above. Run as many rounds as the time allotted for the drill will allow. At the conclusion the player(s) with the most points win.

P P P P P P P P

P P P P P P P P

**Results:** This drill will improve the ability to catch and work on quick hands and feet

## Fielding

**Defensive Philosophy: “If the Other Team Doesn’t Score, We Can’t Lose”**

### The Six Qualities of a Good Fielder

- Quick feet
- Strong legs
- Quick hands
- Soft hands
- Quick mind
- Glide

### The Two Keys to Being a Good Fielder

- Never lose sight of your glove
- In time - On time - Every time - Smoothly

### The Fundamentals

- Good Athletic Position (GAP)
- How to Get to Perfect Fielding Position (PFP)
- Pre Pitch and 1 – 2 Field
- Footwork on D.P. around base and Feeds
- Making the Throw and Momentum and Follow Throw
- Play Low

### Teach Perfect Fielding Position

- Glove Foot in Front of Throwing Foot – heel to toe
- Spread Twice Shoulder Width – Stagger base for better balance – creates base of Fielding Triangle
- Elbows to the knees
- Slip the elbows off – Back Flat
- Slide the hands out – establishes point of fielding Triangle





**Glove Foot in Front Of Throwing Foot**



**Spread feet Twice Shoulder width**



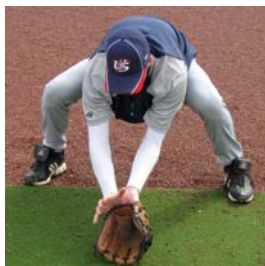
**Back Flat – Glove out Fielding Triangle with Staggered base**

## Perfect Fielding Position (Play Low)

- G.A.P. – good athletic position
- Fielding Triangle – (Allow you to create a wide base and get your back side down)
- Hands out in front (See the ball and react to bad hop)
- Cover, Cradle & Separate



Fielding Triangle



Back Flat - Glove at the tip of the Triangle

## Teach Ready Position (pre-pitch)

- Fielder should be spread and flexed with a slight bend at the waist.
- Glove out in front with palm to the sky
- Rocking on the balls of feet – Ready to move.
- The fielder should be in this position as the pitcher is getting ready to throw.

Some Coaches teach fielders to take a throw foot / glove foot step as the pitcher starts to throw. This is ok but can cause a fielder to end up flat footed or with a foot in the air when the ball is hit which can cause the fielder to get a late jump on the ball.

## Ready Position / 1 – 2 Field

### Ready Position / 1 – 2 Field (play Low)

- Prevents players from being flat footed so they are ready to move.
- Rocking on the balls of feet.
- Short Choppy Steps as the fielder approaches the ball.
- Last 2 Steps are the big ones. 1 – 2 Field.

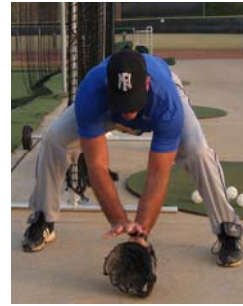




Spread – On the balls of feet



1 – throwing foot to ball



2 – glove foot and glove hit the ground

**Fielding Pre-Pitch Musts** – these are advanced for young players but the sooner they are able to learn these concepts, the better fielder they will become.

- Catcher’s sign
- Infield Positioning (Adjustment)
- Number of Outs / Situations
- Who is covering on Steal, Hit & run and who has the pitcher on come-backer
- Bunt Coverage

## Fielding Faults or Problems

### Not getting in PFP:

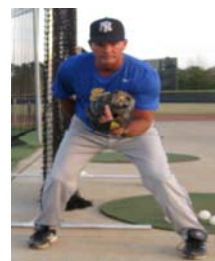
- Not getting heel to toe
- Not getting 2x shoulder width – fielder can’t get low enough and poor hand placement
- Knees in – rear end up and knees in the way
- Straight Legs – bending at waist not knees
- Glove formed incorrectly – the fingers curled up
- Hands too deep and inside feet – hard hands



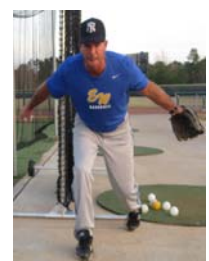
Hands inside feet



Feet to close together



Glove Flipper



Eagle

### Other Fielding Faults:

- Dead Stop
- Playing too Tall
- Starting too Low
- Flipper
- Patty caker
- Eagle
- Late to Field
- Raising up

## Infielder's Tips

- Think about what you want to do with the ball ... before the ball is pitched to the batter.
- Keep your head in the game and know the situation.
- Be aware and consider the speed of the batter and any base runners.
- Be aware of how much time you have. Don't panic or rush your throw.
- Knock a hard hit ball down, keep it front of you, you will have plenty of time to make a play.

## Fielding Position

- Standard fielding position is spread and flexed..
- The back is relatively flat with a slight elbow bend and tension free.
- The hands will accept the ball comfortably out and away from the body. Fielding Triangle or PFP.
- The last steps before catching the ball should be 1 – 2 field (throwing foot on 1 and glove foot on 2) moving through for natural transition to throwing footwork.
- When first and third basemen are playing up on the grass, they will begin with a lower ready position for better lateral reaction while short stop and second base will begin in a more upright position for better "hop judging" and increased perception of ball speed.
- Movement on the balls of the feet is critical for a smooth approach to the ball. The first quick step is critical. Infielders need to have quick feet.
- When charging, adjust to the speed and hop of the ball. Ideally, receive the ball from the center to the glove side of the body.
- Subtle movements, short choppy steps mean soft hands. Keep the feet moving ... if the ball hits your glove while your body is stopped, the result is "hard hands".

## Glove Action and Pre-Pitch Preparation

- Glove action - the glove hand should be relaxed with the palm directed inward and upward.
- To help extend the arms, use a slight shoveling action from under the ball.
- Sometimes short hops require a strong positive forward movement through the ball.
- Use a TWO-handed approach on all routine ground balls.
- Strive to catch the big hop or short hop ... work to avoid the in-between hop.

## Pre-Pitch Movement

- Every player needs to find and establish movement for momentum as the ball enters the hitting zone.
- As the ball enters the hitting zone, the weight becomes distributed evenly on the balls of the feet with a rocking motion.
- Be mentally prepared for the ball to be hit to either side of you and be prepared to react.
- Experiment with techniques which increase your comfort and allow you to relax.

## Approach

- Quick feet with short choppy steps.
- Quick feet and strong legs are so important to the success of the fielding.

- Good feet allow the fielder to get to the hop we want to catch which allows the fielder to have quick and soft hands.
- Allows the fielder to get in position to make strong accurate throws.
- The fielder will judge ground balls with our eyes which relay a message to our feet to either speed up or slow down.
- Anticipation is the key to instinct and judgment. NEVER be surprised when the ball comes your way. Anticipate and expect the ball.

## Tagging Runners

- Straddle the bag
- Let the Ball Travel
- Expect the Bad Throw
- V Tag – (Down and Up in a V)

## Rundowns

- Get Runner at Full Speed
- Get the ball up in the throwing hand
- Don't Fake the Throw
- The player waiting to receive the ball should "Close the Ground" – short choppy step with hands up to receive the ball.

## Relay & Cutoff

- Relay - used to advance the ball, not to stop it.
- Cutoff – Stop the throw
- Tandem Relays (SS and 2B)
- Teach players to throw *through* the cutoff, *not to* the cut.
- Teach your team who the cutoff man is. SS or 2B on outfield throw to 2B. SS on throw to 3B from any Outfielder (LF, CF or RF), 3B on throw to the plate from LF, 1B from CF or RF.


# Fielding drills

## Drill # 1

### Perfect Fielding Position (PFP)

Teaching players the perfect fielding position is so important for young players. Teach them the Six Qualities of a good fielder. Quick Feet, Strong Legs, Quick Hands, Soft hands, Quick Mind and Glide. This drill teaches the players the fielding triangle.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Gloves, balls ... draw a fielding Triangle in the infield dirt.

**How this drill works:** Draw a Triangle in the infield dirt,  Have players place the **throwing foot toe** on 1 corner and the **glove foot instep** at the other. This will stagger the base and give the player better balance. Bring the back flat and reach out with the hands and place the glove at the tip of the triangle. This will put the player in perfect fielding position (PFP).

**This is accomplished by have the players perform the following step:**

- Put the Glove foot in front of their throwing foot (heel to toe)
- Then spread their feet twice their shoulder width - this is done by taking the glove foot out to twice shoulder width, not by moving the throwing foot.
- Bring the elbows to the knees.
- Slip them off the knees and slide them out to the tip of the triangle.
- The back should be flat.



Perfect Fielding Position



Glove out with Cover hand



Back Flat with Staggered Base

## Drill # 2

### Ready Position / 1 – 2 Field

Teaches players how to get ready before the ball is hit and how to move into PFP. Players need to learn to have a little movement before the ball is hit, (a body in motion tends to stay in motion) and learn to move to the ball in a smooth approach.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Gloves and balls

**How this drill works:** Players should start with their feet approximately shoulder width apart in the spread and flex position. Their glove should be waist high and have the palm to the sky. Teach them they have a glass of water in their glove and they don't want to spill it. The players should approach the ground ball on the balls of their feet with short choppy steps. The last 2 steps should be the only big ones. "1-2 field" is as follows:

The throwing foot should go out towards the ball ... this is step 1... then the glove foot goes out to twice the shoulder width and this is 2. When the glove foot hits the ground, the glove should hit the ground in the PFP or fielding triangle position.

**Results:** The fielder will work on approaching the ball with short choppy steps under control ... the last 2 steps are "1 – 2 Field" ... and ending in PFP. Fielder should approach the ball with the glove out in front, palm to the sky. Cover, Cradle the ball in and separate the hands to begin forming a throwing position. Keep the glove in front and play low.

## Drill # 3

### Keep the Ball in Front

One of the first things you should do to teach younger players how to field properly is to get them in front of the ball.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Gloves and balls. Two cones about 10' apart.

**How this drill works:** Explain to each player that he cannot let the ball get past him and cross the imaginary line between the two cones. The coach will roll, or bounce the ball towards the player in an attempt to get the ball past him. Instruct him on how to shuffle from side to side with his glove in front of him to get his entire body in front of the ball. You may have a few players who don't want to get in front of the ball because they fear it will hurt them. This is completely normal for players at a younger age. You will want to perform this drill with soft baseballs or with tennis balls – just to get the players used to getting hit.



**Results:** The fielder will try to keep the ball in front of their body by moving their feet by shuffling from side to side. Don't cross your feet. Keep the glove in front and play low.

## Drill # 4

### Coach Roll Ground Ball with Throw Back

This drill will work on fielders starting from the ready position, 1-2 field, proper throwing position and accurate throw back.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Gloves, ball and coach

**How this drill works:** The fielder starts in the Ready Position. When the coach rolls the ball, the fielder should approach the ball with short choppy steps and stay under control. When the ball is about 10 feet from the fielder, the fielder should go to 1-2 field and end in PFP. The fielder then pops his feet to the throwing position. The front shoulder should line up with the coach and throw the ball back to the coach. Teach your fielder to follow their throw (step through it toward the target).

**Results:** The fielder will work on the approach to the ball with short choppy steps and under control ... the last 2 steps are 1 – 2 Field ... ending in PFP. Fielder should approach the ball with the glove out in front, palm to the sky. Cover, cradle the ball in and separate the hands. Then pop feet to throwing position and make an accurate throw to the coach.

## Drill # 5

### Hand Eye Coordination

This drill is used to help players learn to catch the ball while creating a little competition between players.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** 2 Tennis Balls for each group of 2 players.

**How this drill works:** Players will partner up. 1 player will toss both Tennis Balls in the air from the same hand. The other player will try to catch both balls, 1 in each hand. The object is to try to catch them above their head. This is a great way to teach younger players how to catch both thrown and fly balls. The coach can create a competition out of this drill.

**Results:** Players learn to catch the ball in the air above their head. Great drill for improving a player's ability to catch the ball.

## Drill # 6

### Ground Ball Relay

This drill will work on PFP while having a fielding competition with the team. Work on the 6 Qualities of a good fielder.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Gloves, 2 balls ... divide players into 2 teams

**How this drill works:** Divide players into 2 even teams.

Team 1 X X X X	Team 2 X X X X
X X X X	X X X X

Each team will have a baseball and all players start in PFP. The teams will roll the ball back and forth down the line ... all players must field the ball. Go down the line and back. When the ball reaches the person that started the relay, all players should take a knee. The first team to complete the relay is the winning team.

**Results:** Teaches players to compete while working on PFP

## Drill # 7

### Short Hop and Short Rolls

This drill will work on PFP and the 6 Qualities of a good fielder.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Glove and a ball

**How this drill works:** Players will take turns rolling ground ball and throwing short-hops to one another. Players should field the ball in PFP, working on soft hands and quick hands. As the ball is in the air on the





**Results:** Improve the ability of the players to catch the ball in the air.

## Drill # 10

### Quarterback Drill

This drill will work on the player's ability to catch pop ups and fly balls. Catching a ball in the air is one of the most difficult skills a player can learn. Hand eye coordination is so important to allowing players to be able to catch the ball in the air.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Glove, Tennis balls (or Reduced Injury Balls) and cones

**How this drill works:** The player will start at a cone set at approximately 15 feet from the coach with both feet pointing toward the coach. The coach will say "Go" and points in the direction where he wants his player to drop step and go. As soon as the player hears the word "Go", he will use the drop step and cross over in order to turn his body and sprint in the direction to where the coach has pointed. If the coach points to the player's right - the player will drop step with his right foot and cross over with his left. If the coach points to the player's left - the outfielder will drop step with his left and cross over with his right. Once the player has sprinted approximately 15 – 20 feet (depending on skill and age) the coach will throw a pop up or fly ball, and the player will try to get under the ball in order to make the catch. As the players improve at this drill, you can throw the ball and try to get them to catch the ball on the run. After they make several catches you can increase the difficulty by throwing the ball further in order to make players run harder and possibly make a diving catch.

To make the drill easier and work the players harder, have each player line up with a ball in their glove. When it is their turn they will toss you the ball and wait for your command. Once they have caught the ball they will jog back to the line up with the ball in their glove.

**Results:** Improve the ability of the players to catch the ball in the air.

## Drill # 11

### Tennis Racket Fly Balls

Will improve player's ability to catch and communicate.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Glove, Tennis Racket and Tennis Balls

**How this drill works:** Using a tennis racket and tennis balls, hit fly balls to your players. As the players improve, add a communication element to the drill. Have half of your players line up in center and the other half in right (or left) field. Hit tennis balls with the racket in places where the two players will have to communicate in order to catch the ball. Hit balls that are over their shoulder and in front of them. This drill will allow players to work on communication between the outfielders and infielders on fly balls that are hit softly between the outfield and infield.

**Results:** Players will learn to catch Pop ups and Fly balls and communicate with each other.

## Fly Ball Principles

- Catch the ball 10 Fingers Up above the waist and 10 Fingers Down below the waist.
- Never "backpedal". Always use the drop step and run!
- Don't call the ball too early. When the fly ball is coming down, the player must learn to call the ball. "Ball .. Ball .. Ball"
- The outfielder has priority over the infielder. The infielder should go after the ball and try to make the catch until the outfielder calls the infielder off. This method will avoid the ugly collision between the outfielder and infielder.
- *The outfielder always has priority over the infielder on fly balls.*

## Base Running

### Teaching Base Running

Many coaches fail to teach players how to run home to 1B. Good base running is one of the least taught aspects of the game. Make form running a daily routine. Different exercises emphasize good form and help develop speed and power. Spend time during the season to take the players through all the possibilities at each base. Begin at home plate and walk them around each base.

**Hustle Never Has A Bad Day.** Doubles and triples are made in those initial 3-4 steps out of the batters' box.

Base running is one of the least taught and practiced of all the essential skills, yet is still one of the most important, even in the age of the aluminum bat.

Make your players run full speed through every base; every time.

### Teach good running form:

- Run with the head up.
- Relax the muscles in the face. (Any tightness in the face will translate down into the neck and shoulder muscles, restricting movement.)
- Run on the balls of the feet with the toes pointing straight ahead.
- Use the arms as levers. Run with a pumping motion of the arms, chin to back pocket. Run with the elbows close to the sides. Do not let them move from side to side, away from the body.
- Cup the hands loosely.
- Foot speed is dependent on arm speed. The faster the arms pump back and forth, the faster the feet will move.
- Run with the shoulders level.
- Run with the body leaning forward slightly.

## Teach Home to First Base

- Players will stand at home plate.
- Take an imaginary swing.
- They need to explode from the batter's box and run towards first base
- About 3 steps out of the box, the hitter needs to find the ball (this doesn't mean to watch the ball)
- Run a straight line; focus on the front edge of the base.
- Hit the front edge of the base, run past the base and break down (slow down quickly about 15' past the bag) in an athletic position, and look to the fence for an over throw.

## Teach Home to Second Base

**Teach hitters there is no such thing as a single. Every hit is a Double until the Defense stops you.**

- Players will stand at home plate.
- Take an imaginary swing.
- They need to explode from the batter's box and run towards first base
- About 3 steps out of box, the hitter needs to find the ball (this doesn't mean to watch the ball)
- The ball is through to the OF for a hit. About 15' – 20' from the bag, the hitter should: "grab grass", banana or flare out to make a turn
- At the coaches box, dip the inside shoulder to help make the proper turn and create a proper angle, hit the inside corner of the base.
- Take several steps past the base and either continue to second or break down and return to 1B.

# Base Running Drills

## Drill #1

### Learn the Bases

When players first start playing, it's a good idea to instruct them on the different bases and the order in which they have to run. We have all seen young players playing baseball run to a base other than the one they are supposed to. This is a very basic drill but so important to teach new and young players. Don't assume they know where and when to run.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** All you need for this drill is the attention of the players you are coaching and the Home plate, 1B, 2B and 3B set up.

**How this drill works:** Have the players follow you from base to base, starting at home plate and then in order (first, second, third). Explain to the youngsters what happens after you hit the ball and then where you go after first base, where to go after second, etc. It would be a good idea to go through this drill a couple of times, and then at least once during midseason practices and beyond. This will imbed that information in the players and hopefully prevent any embarrassing moments of running to the wrong base. Teach players they can run past 1B.

**Results:** The players will get a fundamental understanding of how to run the bases. Teach them when and where to run when the ball is hit. Teach them when they have to run, force play and when they don't have to run. This is extremely important for young players to learn as they are getting started playing baseball. As the players learn more about the game, you can add more advanced information to this drill like Infield Fly Rule, when to tag up, etc. When they understand the fundamentals of base running and what they are supposed to do when they hit the ball, they really get excited about running the bases.

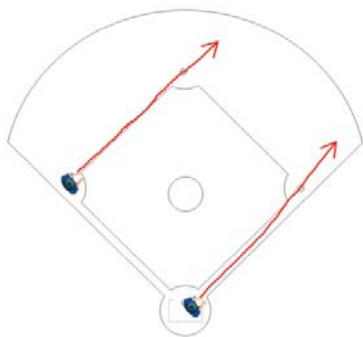
## Drill #2

### Running Through First Base

Teach players to run hard out of the batters box ... to run through 1B while hitting the front edge ... and to breakdown after running *through* (not to) the base. The runner should then find the ball. Many players slow their run to first early and can lose the race to first.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Runners at home plate and at third base. Two lines will form at these bases – one facing first base, and one facing second base.

**How this drill works:** The player will stand at 'home plate', and take an imaginary swing. They need to explode from the batter's box and run towards first base (second base for the group using third base as home plate).



Hit the Front Edge of the base



Break down and find the Ball

**Results:** As they are running toward first, the players need to be aware of the following:

- Look at the front edge of the base as you run but pick a spot 5 yards past first base to run to
- Upon reaching the bag, take a quick look down to make sure they touch the bag
- After reaching the bag, take a quick look right to see if there was an overthrow and they can run to second base.

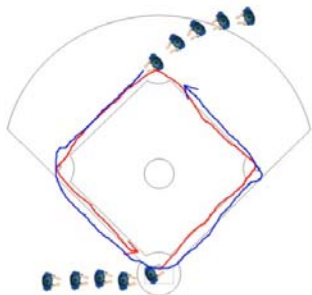
## Drill #3

### Base Running Relay

Running hard around the bases is important for the players to learn. This drill will keep them on their toes and have them compete against their teammates.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Two lines – one at home plate, the other at second base. Two baseballs.

**How this drill works:** The first player at Home and 2B will start with a baseball. The coach will signal for players to “Go”, the players on 2B sprint towards 3B, then home, 1B and back to second and hand the baseball to their next teammate. The runners at home will do the same thing, only they round the bases in the correct order. The teams will continue to do this, handing the ball to the next player in line when they reach their team base. The first team to have all players finish will be the winning team.



**Results:** Players run hard around the bases while competing against the other team. Players make the proper turns as they approach each base.

## Drill #4

### Four Base Relay

This is a competition for the players to see who can run the bases the fastest ... or it can also be a race between 2 teams.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** All of the bases in place and ready for base runners. If the race is a team competition, divide your players into two teams of relatively equal speed.

**How this drill works:** Have all of the players of one team line up at home plate. Then when the coach says “Go”, he will start the stopwatch and time each player as he runs around the bases. The fastest player is the winner. If you are doing a team race, the first player will run all of the bases in the proper order and tag the next person in their line. Once all of the players have crossed home plate, you note the time on the stopwatch. Then the next team goes. The fastest team is the winner. You can play for a prize or Push Ups.



**Results:** This is merely reinforcement of the last drill, but woven into a competition for the players.

They will learn to run the bases in the proper order as they compete against their teammates in this base running drill.

## **Drill #5**

### **Advanced Base Running Drill**

This drill teaches players how to run all four bases. This is a great drill for teaching, conditioning and fun.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** 4 bases and the players in 2 lines at Home

**How this drill works:** Two lines at home plate. 1 line will start in the right handed batter's box and the other in the left handed batter's box. The coach will act like he throws a pitch and both hitters will take a swing. The line in the RH batters box runs like he just hit a double and run to 2B. The line in the LH will run through 1B and break down. The runners will stay at 1B and 2B. The coach will repeat and all 4 runners will run. Runner at 1st goes to 3rd (picking up coach). Runner at 2nd goes home but should wait like he is watching the ball go through the infield between SS and 3B before he runs. When a runner reaches home, they should switch lines. 2 lines at home still the same. After the second time, the bases will be loaded. All runners previously discussed do the same. The runner on 3B will tag up and run home like a ball was hit to the outfield. Ensure the runners switch lines after reaching home, so they will now have different routes/situations to run.

**Results:** This is also a great teaching drill for players to learn to run the bases and it is a great conditioning and teamwork drill.

## Stretching / Balance

Proper warm-ups and stretching before practice and games cannot be ignored regardless of the level of play or the age of the players. This is often neglected, particularly in youth baseball, because practice time on crowded fields is so limited that many coaches immediately begin practice without much warm-up & stretching time. The following is a list of suggested stretches and form running. Pick out several before every practice

### Stretching and Form Running List

#### Stretching

1. Trunk Twist
2. RH Hitter
3. LH Hitter
4. RH Thrower
5. LH Thrower
6. PFP
7. PFP right / left toe to sky
8. PFP left / right toe to sky
9. Right Quad. stretch
10. Left Quad. stretch
11. Sumo and Butterflies
12. Right Arm across / pull in
13. Left Arm across / pull in
14. Right Hand between Shoulder blade / pull down
15. Left Hand between Shoulder blade / pull down
16. Right Wrist Stretch back
17. Right Wrist Stretch down
18. Left Wrist Stretch back
19. Left Wrist Stretch down
20. Arm Circles Forward
21. Arm Circles Back
22. Right Leg bent outside Hurdle Stretch
23. Left Leg bent outside Hurdle Stretch
24. Right Leg bent inside touch toe Stretch
25. Left Leg bent inside touch toe Stretch

#### FORM RUNNING

1. High Knees
2. Butt Kicks
3. Power High Knees
4. Power Skip Up
5. Power Skip Out
6. Karaoke
7. Lunge
8. Sprint 75%
9. Sprint 100%



## Batting Cage Drills List

**Every player will take 25 Dry Swings before you start in the Cage and no more than 6 swings per round ... wear Helmet to keep things moving.**

Long Cage: 6 swings off a Tee – hitter tries to hit a line drive in the back of the net.

Long Cage – Front toss or flip – hitter tries to hit a line drive in to the back of the net.

Flip Net - Tee (Balance, Stance and Finish) – 6 Swings

Flip Net - Basketball off Tee to help increase players strength

Flip Net - Opposite Field (set the Tee up deep and away for the hitter)

Short Cage - 2 Bunts to first and third – Front flip or toss 6 pitches

Short Cage - 2 Bunt for Hit / Squeeze - Two Strike Hitting – 6 Pitches

Flip Net - One Arm - Top hand / Bottom Hand – 6 each hand

Flip Net - Bat Speed - toss 3 balls quickly to the hitter. Work on short, compact swing.

Short Cage - Bunts to first and third – Bounce – 6 pitches

Short Cage - 6 swings - Best Cut / Square Ball Up – 6 Pitches

Flip Net – High Tee – set the Tee at or above the top of the strike zone. Hitter tries to hit line drives.

2” x 4” Balance Beam – Hitter works on the lower half of their swing. Balance is the Key!!

## Infield Drill List

### Infield Drills

P.F.P walking (tunnel) – cover cradle separate

Short roll in P.F.P. – Coach or partner roll GBs back and forth and fielder stay in PFP

Short Roll – Last Step – 1 – 2 Field (when the persons hand goes back – fielder 1 – 2 Field)

Short Hop – throw balls back and forth like skipping a rock

Short Hop w/ Quick Feet – pop the feet to throwing position

Back Hand PFP – (Chest to knee with glove out in front)

Glove Hand Side PFP – (Chest to knee with glove in front)

Long Roll – 25’ – fielder takes short choppy steps and the last 2 step are 1 – 2 field.

Pick Ups – No glove – 2 cones 10’ apart. 1 ( P ) or ( C ) rolls balls and make player goes side to side.

Hat Drill– Brim of the hat in mouth, roll GBs, player has to get hands out to see the glove.

Coaches Bad Throws – (High, Low, Side to Side and In the dirt)

Wall Drills –Player throw balls off the wall and field GBs  
Ball / Glove Awareness – Ball and Glove, fielder works on quick hands and feet  
Agility Ladder and Jump Rope

## Throwing Drills / Throwing Games List

### Throwing Drills

Two Knees – Elbow up / Wrist Flip  
Two Knees – Figure Eight  
One Knee – Elbow up / Wrist flip  
G.A.P. – Face Partner – Elbow up / Wrist flip  
Figure Eight  
Throwing T  
Towel Drill  
Quick Hands (short toss – quick Hand)  
Lead Arm  
Follow Throw (Hit to SS, throw to 1B & follow, 1B to 2B, 2B – 3B, 3B - C)  
Follow Throw w/Tag (Hit to SS, throw to 1B & follow, 1B to 2B, 2B – 3B, 3B - C)  
60 / 90 / 120 (adjust for age)  
Long Toss  
Progressive Long Toss (M-W-F) or (Tu.-Th –Sat)  
    Day 1 – 30', 60', 90' & 120' distances can be short based on age and ability.  
    Day 2 – Same as Day 1 back up to 150' (One bounce throw)  
    Day 3 – Longest Distance 60, 90, 120, 150 and Max out.  
Balance Beam – Make a balance beam out of a 2" x 4". Have players work on their balance.  
Resistance Bands

### Throwing Games

Quick Toss (30 seconds)  
Throwing (Long Toss – back up Game)  
Bucket Drill (set bucket at Home)  
Hit the hat  
    “21”  
Round the horn relay  
Four Corners w/ follow your throw  
Line Relay

### Position Play Drills

Slow Rollers  
Triangle Drill (SS, 2<sup>nd</sup>, Roller and follow the ball)  
Triangle Drill (Pitcher, 1<sup>st</sup> and Roller and follow the ball)  
Quick Hands / Quick Toss (1 min.)  
Glove Awareness  
Double Play Feeds and Turns (Key to DP is Momentum)

- P.F.P – Underhand toss
- P.F.P – DP feed – throwing side to partner
- P.F.P – DP feed - glove side to partner
- P.F.P – Back hand toss
- Box Feeds (4 cones and 5 players) w/o and w / Gloves.
- Run Downs – (get runner full speed, Ball up, Don't fake, Close Ground)
- Full infield and bases loaded rundown
- Line Relay
- Tandem Relay – (SS and 2B)
- Round the Horn Relay
- Round the Bases
- Foot work
- Tagging Runners
- Four Corners – (PFP)
- Four Corners – (Ready Position / 1 – 2 field)
- Double Fungo
- Bunt coverage

## Agility Drills

### Drill # 1

#### T Relay

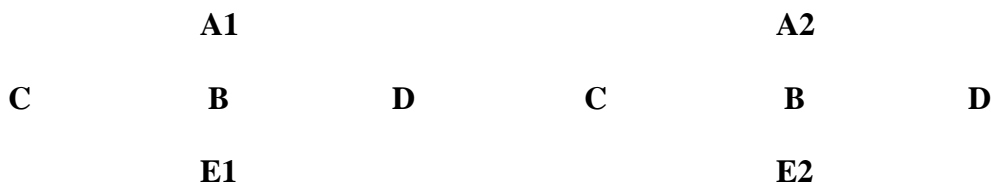
Relay working on kids foot work and quickness while allow them to compete. The players will love this relay.

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Tennis balls and cones

**How this drill works:** 2 Sets of cones in the shape of a T. Put a Tennis ball on the middle 3 cones and on the cone at 1X and 2X. Do not put a tennis ball on E1 or E2

**Team 1**

**Team 2**



Have half of the players on Team 1 line up behind cone A1 and the other half line up behind E1. Have half of the players on Team 2 line up behind cone A2 and the other half line up behind E2. The first player in line at A1 and A2 picks up the tennis ball and run to the middle cone B, pick up the tennis ball on B and put the one in his hand on cone B. Then the player will shuffle to cone C and switch tennis balls as before, then the player will shuffle across to D and switch the tennis balls as before. Shuffle back to the middle cone B and switch out the tennis ball and run ahead and put the ball in hand on cone E. Then the players at cone E1 and E2 will pick up the ball and do the same thing as the first players. The first team to have all players complete the drill is the winning team.



## Drill Summary

Drills are designed to work on the mechanics and fundamentals of the game. They are used to create muscle memory so when a player is in a game situation or competition, they don't have to think about what to do. They just feel it and do it. The "Quality" of the drills is more important than the "Quantity" of the drills. Taking poor or incorrect swings, improper throwing or fielding during drills, etc. will create bad habits and poor game performance. The truth is whatever players do during the drills is all we can expect them to do on the field. When a player is struggling, go back to the basics. Drills should help create and develop a focus that good players will understand and know ... this will help them during the times of struggles. You should remind them all the time to stay spread and flexed in an athletic position. It all starts from that position whether they are throwing, fielding or hitting.

## Baseball Circus Game

**Equipment or Setup needed:** Cones, balls, bats, stopwatch and players divided in to 2 teams.

**How and why the game is played:** This game is played to teach players how to compete, play hard and to have fun playing the greatest game ever invented. There are 4 different events and all players will take part in each event. Points will be awarded and after the 4 events are complete, there will be a winning team.

### Long Toss Game

Have players throw 3 balls down the foul line for distance & accuracy. Give 5 points for the longest throw, 3 points for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1 point for the 3<sup>rd</sup> longest throw. One team and one player can have the top 3 throws. The maximum number of points one team could receive is 9 points.

### Fielding Game

1 player at a time will field 3 Ground Balls rolled by the coach. If the player fields the ball, he gets 1 point and if he throws it back to the coach he gets 1 point. There is a possibility of 6 points per player on each team.

### Hitting Game

Each player on the team will get to hit 3 balls off the tee or coach pitch. If the player hits the ball past the pitcher, they get 1 point, if he hits it past the baseline, he gets 2 points and if he hits it in the OF, he gets 3 points.

### Team Base Running Game

Have each player on a team run around the bases and get a total combined time. The team with the fast combined time is the winning team. The winning team gets 5 points and the other gets 3 points. You can also do the baseball running relay if you would prefer. This will allow the kids to compete against each other.

**Results:** Add up the total points to determine the winning team. This is a great way to end the season. Give a prize to the winning team.

## Baseball Situations

### Teaching Player's where to throw the ball:

- Baseball is a game where players must think ahead and know what to do with the ball before it is hit to them.
- No one on base, ground ball to the infield ... the Infielder should throw the ball to 1B
- If there is a man or men on base and it is a force play ... the Infielders should throw the ball to get the lead runner out if possible.
- If there is a man on 1B ... the pitcher should always turn to the middle infielder (SS & 2B) and check to see who will be covering 2B if he gets the ball.

### A Good Rule of Thumb for Outfielder:

Always throw One base ahead of the runner or runners. Teach outfielder to throw *through* the cutoff man and *not* to the cutoff man. The Infielder should be able to cut the ball if he needs too but you want your Outfielder to learn to throw to the base. This is difficult with young players but should be the Goal of all players.

#### Examples:

- Base hit with no one on base ... throw to 2B.
- Base hit with a man on 1B ... throw to 3B.
- Base hit with a runner on 2B ... throw to home plate.
- Base hit with runners on 1B & 2B ... throw to 3B.
- Base hit with runners on 1B & 3B ... throw to 3B.
- Base hit with runners on 2B & 3B ... throw to home plate.
- On an extra base hit ... the outfielder should think 2 bases ahead of the runner.

### Teach the Proper Cutoff Man:

#### Examples:

- Base hit to LF ... SS cutoff to 2B, SS cutoff to 3B and 3B cutoff to Home
- Base hit to CF .... SS or 2B 2 cutoff to 2B depending on which side of 2B the ball is hit, SS cutoff to 3B, many coaching teach the 2B to handle the throw from RF due to arm strength but as players get bigger and stronger, SS should handle the throw from RF, 1B cutoff to Home.
- Base hit to RF .... 2B cutoff to 2B, SS cutoff to 3B, 1B cutoff to Home
- With younger players that don't have the arm strength to make certain throws ... the SS and 2B may be the cutoff man for some of the situations above but as players get older... they should follow the guidelines above for proper cut plays.

## Preparing Your Baseball Team

After putting them through the drills and having structured practice plans, you are most certainly going to notice a great difference in the skill level of your players. By putting them through many of these drills, you are preparing them for many of the game situations and giving them the skills to succeed in these areas. Coaching baseball isn't always easy. You have a lot of players of different skill levels and they need to be brought along at a reasonable pace. It's also important to keep the practices enjoyable for the players. They will learn more if the practice is structured for them to have fun too!

It was stressed throughout much of this manual that certain things are key to developing your players' skills.

Here are those elements once again:

- **Proper instruction**
- **Repetition**
- **Coach support instead of criticism**
- **Enjoyment**

**Hopefully you will find the coach's manual and the practice plans useful while helping your players reach their full potential!**

### **Key points for Coaches to Remember:**

**“If the other team doesn't score, You Can't Lose”**

### **Teach your players:**

**“Your Eyes Should Never Leave the Field”**

**“You Never Know who is Watching so Always Play Hard”**

**“Practice Makes Permanent, Perfect Practice Makes Perfect”**

### **Coaches**

**Be a student of the game!**

**“Kids Don't Care How Much You Know, Till They Know How Much You Care!!”**

**Good Luck this Year!**