

# T-Ball and Mite League Coaching



*TOWN of CARY*  
**SPORTS**

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# T-Ball and Mite Coaching Introduction Overview

## Introduction

As part of the Town of Cary Parks and Recreation and Cultural Resources continuing evolution of coach training this document will try to help new T-Ball and Mite league coaches to follow the guidelines of the USA Baseball Long Term Athlete Develop (LTAD) Plan for the Activate stage (ages 4-7). The links to the full documents can be found at the following <https://www.sportdev.org/LTAD> (Requires login for USA Baseball Coach Mobile App)

This guide will provide a starting point for various skills using simple drills scaled down for younger players. It will also provide several sample practice plans

## USA Baseball Mobile Coach App

USA Baseball has also developed the USA Baseball Mobile Coach App for Desktops, Android and IOS devices. It is a free app that provides skill building with many drills, most with short videos examples, practice plans, coach's education courses as well as Pitch Smart information. It is required to create an account at the USA Baseball web site <https://www.sportdev.org> Click the Sign In button to either log in or create an account. This account will be the same one used for the Mobile Coach App on your mobile device. For instructions on downloading the app click on **Education** → **Mobile Coach App** then select the app desired. If you use both a mobile device and desktop, the practice plans you create will be available in both.

It is also recommend browsing the USA Baseball <https://www.usabaseball.com> site for helpful information and upcoming events at USA Baseball facilities.

## LTAD Activate stage

See the Activate section of the LTAD Full Report at the following link for specifics.

<https://www.sportdev.org/LTAD> (requires login). The following is an excerpt from the LTAD Full report.

### Stage 1: Activate

Chronological Age: Entry – 7

Foster a love for the game by introducing children to the sport of baseball through styles of gameplay that promote fun, creative play and success. Athletes in this stage should be developing basic movement and motor skills via sport sampling. Baseball should also be a means for developing friendships and encouraging other positive peer interaction. Proper warm up and cool downs should be part of the sport experience.

#### Physical Literacy:

- This is a fundamental stage for young athletes to develop basic physical literacy and fundamental movement skills.
- Basic fundamental skills should be taught and mastered before progressing into more complex skills. These fundamental skills should include: overhand throwing, catching, striking the ball, fielding a bouncing ball, running, and dodging. In order to achieve mastery of these skills, a remedial breakdown of specific skills may be required (e.g., rolling a ball at a very slow speed, helping a player swing to make contact with a ball on a tee).
- A modified form of baseball is recommended to increase mastery of basic skills. An example of game modification includes the Fun at Bat program. Specific baseball tasks can continue to be modified throughout this stage in terms of the size of the ball, distances of the bases, format of the game, etc.
- Early stage athletes should see and feel the correct movement pattern (i.e., throwing, catching, hitting) as early and often as possible.
- Demonstrations of appropriate skill performance are encouraged and should be performed by a knowledgeable coach.
- Athletes need to receive ample feedback while learning new skills.
- Early stage athletes should be actively involved in playing and developing skills with minimal boredom or “talking time” (e.g., avoid “single ball, one line” practice time where everyone is standing and awaiting a turn). Having multiple coaches available can help facilitate this with younger athletes.
- Early stage athletes should be introduced initially to closed skills first (e.g., hit off a batting tee) to control external factors before moving on.
- Early stage athletes’ cognitive stress levels should be highly managed and easy decision making solutions should be provided.

#### Physical Development:

- Children should be introduced to movement and play activities that develop motor skills and muscular strength in a fairly unstructured and exploratory manner. Game-based activities that are fun, engaging and socially stimulating can help young children experience the mere enjoyment of learning new skills and playing with friends. Creative games activities that develop hand-eye coordination (e.g., catch and toss) and body weight management abilities (e.g., hopping, jumping, and tumbling) can serve as the building blocks for more complex activities.

#### Injury Prevention:

- Full body warm up before and full body cool down after practice for children to learn healthy habits.
- Participant pitching is discouraged during games.
- No year-round participation in a single sport; take at least four months off from throwing sports.

### **Psychosocial Well-Being:**

- Begin to develop intrinsic motivation for lifelong sport and physical activity participation.
- Emphasize enjoyment of physical activity in general and baseball as a great avenue to experience sport enjoyment.
- Focus on modeling and rewarding (with praise, encouragement) positive sport behaviors/successes.
- Develop positive social interactions and communication among teammates, parents and coaches.
- The goal should be to foster a lifetime love of baseball; the emphasis at this age should be on promoting physical activity/baseball enjoyment and intrinsic motivation for movement and skill development.
- Psychological skill development should not be a primary focus, but monitoring athlete stress (by coaches and parents) and explaining the basic concepts of psychological skill development, including healthy goal setting, represents a positive and effective means to promote athlete psychosocial health and performance.
- Sport should be a venue for athletes to develop friendships and positively interact with peers and adults. This will set the stage for broader social development as well as a lifetime love of baseball.

### **Specialization:**

- No single sport specialization.
- Sport and activity sampling are highly recommended.

### **Periodization and Competition:**

- Parents and coaches should encourage sampling of multiple sports that primarily focus on deliberate play (activities that are intrinsically motivating and are meant to be enjoyed).
- Develop athleticism by playing multiple sports.
- Focus on high amounts of deliberate play.
- Athletes should spend 75 percent of dedicated time to sports training, or participating in deliberate play, and no more than 25 percent of dedicated time to sport should be spent competing.
- Athletes can participate in each sport one to two days per week in season, for no more than four months out of the calendar year at a time.

## Lessons Learned Coaching T-Ball and Mite Leagues

- This may be the very first time the players are introduced to organized anything so remember that what you say may be taken very literally. For example yelling “GET THE BALL” may result in 12 kids chasing the ball and winding up in a dogpile or tug of war over the ball.
- This is as much a social event for the kids as it is a sport introduction. They want to see their new friends and have fun. Take advantage of the desire to have fun and keep it enjoyable for the kids. It doesn’t always have to be drill, drill, drill. Take cues from the players to see what they like best and go with the flow sometimes
- The order “make a line” is a new concept to most of them and will result in a mess if not assisted by coaches
- Don’t expect more from your own kid than the other players. After my kid stopped playing baseball I went back to coaching T-Ball and after the first practice I apologized to my kid for coaching his T-Ball team. You don’t want to be “THAT” coach
- Kids will have a wide variety of skill levels, some could move up to machine pitch with minimal issues, others have no concept of running, throwing hitting or catching. Don’t give up on them because they may have never been exposed to sports but may be a quick learner or not, but they still deserve the opportunity to play
- These levels will change over the course of a season – adjust each drill for each kid. Challenge but do not overwhelm.
- Let them know that they will make mistakes throughout their playing career and that mistakes should be forgotten almost as soon as they happen. Dwelling on a problem affects the most important part of the game – THE NEXT PLAY. Nothing can be done to correct a mistake, learn from it and move on. Also let them know that if they never make a mistake that they are not growing as an athlete. They need to be working hard enough to fail in order to improve their skills
- The first two or 3 practices should focus on skills in a clinic style to ensure that the players understand the basics of throwing, catching, hitting and running. Try to get 1 adult per player for these practices (preferably not their own kid). By running clinic style you will also have the opportunity to teach your assistants as part of the group.
- Attention spans are short and bored kids are problems in the making. Multiple stations with 5-8 minutes per station helps reduce issues. Over the years of experience I think that attention span equals about 1 minute per year old. So a 5 year old has about 5 minutes before becoming a problem. Describing a drill should be kept as short as possible and talking about team goals and such should be kept to under 30 seconds at a shot.
- Kids love to run, when things go wild revert to races to bring back focus
- When talking to young players try to position them so they will see the least amount of distractions, such as kids facing outfield, rather than behind home plate facing bleachers, where their little brother is running around or grandma is waving.
- Pair up kids with similar skill levels so they can sharpen each other’s skills
- Repetition of correct mechanics of basic skills is the key to skill development. But mix it up to keep it fun



- T-Ball kids will rarely be able to play catch together, maybe a max 2 or 3 per team per year. But rarely will they be able to catch a thrown ball at first base during a game
- Enlist as much help as you can. The more stations, the more repetitions. With a little direction anyone can place a ball on a tee and observe hitting procedure, roll grounders and underhand toss to play catch. You don't want most of the team waiting for a turn. Boredom turns into anarchy.
- Running and hitting off a Tee are several of the first skills kids will acquire. Throwing is followed by catching last as most kids have not developed binocular vision necessary for something being thrown at them.
- The more kids in the outfield during a game means the more opportunity for distraction from the game. I use 3 outfielders to keep them separated and 4 max if we only have 10 kids so one kid isn't in the dugout by themselves
- Plays at first should be emphasized followed by force outs at second or third (by the player that gets the ball tagging second rather than throwing). Standard double plays are mostly out of the question in T-Ball and very limited in Mite. Spend more time on basic skills at this age
- As kids have not developed binocular vision it is recommended to use soft foam ball such as Jugs Lite-Flite baseballs or tennis balls in the beginning stages until they are more comfortable catching. The early games will cause you to close your eyes and hope no one gets hurt.
- Treat your kid like the rest of the kids. Don't put your expectations on their abilities and don't take on-field issues with you on the car ride home. Its rec ball, not life or death, make sure your kid has fun. But don't play favorites either because the team will pick up on that as well.
- Don't start out hitting baseballs to kids because it will scare the heck out of them. Use a very soft ball with progression from dead ball to slow roller increasing speed and distance over time.
- Research possible drills to run, but make accommodations for the skill level of the players. Set them up to be successful
- Document your expectations of the kids and the parents early on to prevent misunderstandings. Ask them to email you if their kid will miss a practice or game to help you plan better
- Rec ball will take a backseat to church, scouts, soccer, martial arts, vacation and many other things.
- Kids can't drive, so don't blame them for being late to practice. Be flexible and don't punish the kids for something out of their control
- No score is kept so skill development and fun should be your priorities
- Always go to practice with a plan and share it ahead of time with your assistants. They may or may not look at it, but give them the opportunity to prepare as well
- The first few games have your players that can catch the best at first base and pitcher. Make sure they know what to do if the ball is hit to them or not, i.e. pitcher fields ball and throws to first base where the first baseman is covering the base.
- Use games as a learning experience for the players. Force outs at second, third and home, tag the runner rather than the base if applicable, tag or throw out runner that leaves the base on a pop fly out without tagging up
- Have player that gets put out go back to the dugout as it is part of the game and prevents multiple force outs at third base during an inning

## Skills and Drills

Some simple drills that can be used for practices are available at <https://sites.google.com/view/cary-tball-and-mite-coaching/drills-and-skills>. Some of the drills refer to “appropriate” balls, for this document that depends on the player’s skill. The balls can be foam practice tennis balls, Jugs Lite-Flite, tennis balls or baseballs provided for the league.

## Warmups and cooldowns

The following are some suggestions for warmups/cooldowns

### Warmups

1. Jog the bases - coach led to prevent kids from racing and pooping out at beginning of practice
2. Jumping Jacks
3. Skip 10 yards – hop 10 yards on right leg, then left leg finish by running to fence
4. Pushups
5. Arm Circles
6. Jump and twist
7. High knees 10 yards
8. Knee grabs 10 yards
9. Ankle touches 10 yards
10. Walking lunges 10 yards
11. Cariocas 20 yards

### Cool Down

1. Stretches
  - a. Arm stretches
  - b. Touch your toes
  - c. Windmills
2. Jog the bases
3. Walk the bases

# Coaching links

[Winning Baseball Beginner to Intermediate](#) This is absolutely the best coaching reference I have seen. If you plan on coaching I highly recommend the book/video.

[Trent Mongero YouTube Channel](#)

[Baseballpositive T-Ball](#) - Highly recommended site

[Baseball Excellence](#)

[QC Baseball](#)

[Baseball Tutorials](#)

[Baseball Catcher.com](#)

[Ripken Baseball YouTube Channel](#)

[Positive Coaching Alliance](#)

## Coaching Clinic Drills

### Hitting

#### Title: Beginning hitter discussion

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Skill Set: Hitting

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per team with help if doing dry swings

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Home plate or throw down plate and bat

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Goal: To discuss various parts of the swing and why they are necessary

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#### **Description of the Drill**

- Demonstrate each of the steps while discussing with team Note location is for T-Ball and coach pitch. Older players will need to determine what is right for them
  - Not all of these steps need to be taught at one time the most important to begin with are; Location, grip, balance, arm location, load and stride, the rest can be worked on as the season goes on
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- Correct location - Use bat placed on plate where it begins to taper. Bat should be an inch or two across plate. Front foot goes at knob of bat. Then place bat between front and back foot parallel with plate without moving front foot location. Back foot should be at least 2/3 length of bat, This will provide the correct location for feet
  - Grip – Demonstrate how bat should be held in fingers not in thumb/palm. Have them put pointer finger in fingers of other hand and squeeze and pull. Then have them put pointer finger in thumb and squeeze and pull. They will see it is easy to pull out from thumb. Knocking knuckles aligned. Check pointer fingers are aligned, then retract pointer fingers. This provides better grip and bat speed. Boxer hands are where top hand (back hand) is held – near the back cheek or bottom of back ear.
  - Balance –knees over toes, hips over heels, shoulders over hips, head over shoulders. Balance should be in all 4 directions,, front to back – (catcher to pitcher) and in/out (to and from plate)
  - Arms should be in an inverted V before initial loading. Bat angle between 45 and 70 degrees. Do not wrap bat around back or rest on shoulder.
  - Load - Back elbow raises to load arms (NIKE Swoosh movement) and front foot steps out slightly to load hips resulting in more power. Stride should be 4-6 inches and land softly on ball of front foot. Core should be engaged for power. Young players will often over

load by wrapping around so they can't spot the ball. Discuss how important it is to see the ball. SEE THE BALL – HIT THE BALL

- Knees inside ankles on stride/ front heel drop ( no lunging at ball)
- Front heel drop begins swing process
- Back knee shifts towards front and starts hips
- Hips lead swing. Arms do not move forward until hips start to rotate. (motion with arms and hips is almost simultaneous)
- Barrel of bat comes near back shoulder, (slides close to body, do not arm bar out). A visual example of a tight rotation would be to demonstrate an ice skater twirling around with arms outstretched then with arms close to body and how much faster they go the closer the arms are to the body.
- Upper body tilts slightly toward back side
- Hands are above barrel and bat is not level. (Optimum launch angle of bat for MLB players home run hits at contact is 24-34° with an exit speed of over 102 mph based on studies). For younger kids a lighter bat translates into faster bat speed.
- Back elbow is drawn to back hip, front elbow stays high to help provide a path to the ball
- Head is almost perfectly still through swing. Shoulder to shoulder through swing with no movement of head. (Ike to Mike)
- Once swing starts back foot is used for balance and is not used for power. Fast hip rotation can cause back foot to leave the ground. Bat should finish high wrapping up on shoulder. Stopping before this point means swing is slowing down before contact.

## Title: Canoe Paddle Drill

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Skill Set: Hitting

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 102 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 Minutes

Equipment Required: Throw down home plate canoe paddle and mini or regular wiffle balls

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Goal: To get players to engage front side as well as keeping hips level and releasing hips while hitting

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Use throw down home plate.
- Player in correct stance for hitting.
- Place paddle behind back just above hips with hands pointed down and palms facing forward just outside of hips and the wide part of paddle to the back of plate.
- Coach pitches ball
- Player strides and engages front side muscles and rotates hips as quickly as possible trying to hit wiffle ball as late as possible with as much power as possible.
- If they swing fast enough the back foot may pull off the ground which is desired to fully release the hips. This will require that they have a stiff front leg in order to keep their balance
- Coach may have to aim where player is expected to swing to make some players successful

## Title: Fastball Front Toss

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Skill Set: Hitting

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 1 or 2athletes

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Bat and wiffle balls for younger players unless using batting cage

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Goal: Focus on rhythm of the hitter with the pitcher and driving the ball up the middle

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### **Description of the Drill**

**Younger players should only be about 15 feet from coach**

**Mini wiffle balls can also be used to increase difficulty (can pitch overhand) Screen not usually necessary with mini wiffle balls**

**Skinny bat (3/4 inch dowel 28 inches long) can also be used to make it more difficult**

**See the following link:**

**[https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Fastball\\_Front\\_Toss.pdf](https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Fastball_Front_Toss.pdf)**

**See the video in the USA Baseball Mobile Coach App**

## Title: Fence drill

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Skill Set: Hitting

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per player

Average Time to Complete: 2 minutes

Equipment Required: Bat and fence

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Goal: To teach the player a short fast compact swing

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Player close to and facing fence
  - Player holds bat and places knob of bat about at belly button and end of bat against fence
  - Player gets in normal batting stance from this position
  - Plyer strides and swings the bat keeping back elbow close to body extending after clearing the fence
  - Repeat steps
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- Younger players should start out slowly with an old bat.
  - Never use a high priced bat for this drill
  - The purpose of this drill is to ensure that we get the hands out in front of the ball and swing with a short, fast, compact stroke rather than reaching out with a long slow swing of the bat.



## Title: Hitting Dry Swings

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Skill Set: Hitting

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach to 1-2 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Throw down home plate, bat

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Goal: To teach how to hold the bat, where to stand when hitting and how to swing

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### Description of the Drill

- Where to stand - place end of bat across plate where it tapers to the back and allow 1-2 inches beyond the base. Front foot is placed behind knob of bat. Back foot should be back in a wide stance. This can be shown by rotating bat from end of bat to parallel to home plate and having kids place back foot about 2/3 length of the bat they are using.

Demonstrate why to hold the bat in fingers rather than palm

- Have kids put one finger in the other hands finger and squeeze. Have them attempt to pull the finger out. The place the finger at the thumb and squeeze and attempt to pull it out. They will see it is easy to pull out from the thumb but harder when placed in the fingers.

Teach kids that loss of balance will result in loss of power

- Balance - Knees over toes, Rear over heels, shoulders over rear and head over shoulders. If head is leaning out, the torque of a power swing will knock them off balance and they lose power during the swing. Test by lightly pushing from all 4 sides.
- Ready position – Boxing hands – Bat in back hand where it would normally be held. Hands up between cheek/chin like a boxer. Bring front hand to grab bat to meet back hand. Bat should be 45 – 70 degree angle, never wrapped behind head or with bat leaning back behind shoulder. Check balance again to make sure.

Demonstrate the knuckle position is important. Knocking knuckles aligned allow for better wrist snap and follow through. Typically kids will use a choke grip that prevents a fast swing and good follow through

- Bat in hands – Out in fingers and held loosely. Knocking knuckles aligned. (Spot check by having them ensure pointer fingers are aligned, make sure they retract pointer fingers) Do not over squeeze as tight muscles result in slow swing, slow swing = weak hit.

Teach kids that they must go back to hit to use different parts of their body

- Load - Back elbow raises to load arms (NIKE Swoosh movement) and front foot steps out slightly to load hips resulting in more power. Slight rocking motion, lightly load back about 2 inches with bat keeping about same angle. Some may take a small step at this point forward. Or with no step shift weight the same as if they were stepping.
- Front heel drop leads the swing causing a weight shift lead hands driving towards the ball and driving the back knee towards the front knee, causing hip rotation resulting in rotating up on back foot with follow through to finish swing. Use a throw the belly button towards the pitcher analogy.

## Title: Location Tee

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Skill Set: Hitting

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 1 or 2athletes

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Appropriate balls bat and tee

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Goal: Hit the ball up the middle, pull side, and opposite field based on contact point

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### **Description of the Drill**

See the following link: [https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Location\\_Tee.pdf](https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Location_Tee.pdf)

See the video in the USA Baseball Mobile Coach App

## Title: Rhythm Tee

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Skill Set: Hitting

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per athlete

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Appropriate balls bat and tee

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Goal: Focus on momentum to drive the ball. Allows for easier hip release for younger players

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### **Description of the Drill**

See the following link: [https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Rhythm\\_Tee.pdf](https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Rhythm_Tee.pdf)

See the video in the USA Baseball Mobile Coach App

## Title: Wiffle Ball Soft Toss

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Skill Set: Hitting

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per hitter

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Screen, wiffle balls , throw down home plate and bat

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Goal: To have kids hit moving pitch

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Set up station on center for safety and only use wiffle balls or setup in infield and have infield practice
- Set up screen about 10 – 15 feet away from home plate
- Coach pitches underhand wiffle balls or overhand with baseballs
- Hitter gets 5 - 10 swings depending on if station (10) or team game (5)and then rotates out

## Catching Drills

Title: Lay down and catch

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Skill Set: Learning to catch

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 1 or 2 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 Minutes

Equipment Required: Jugs Lite-flite or tennis balls

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Goal: To get beginning players to safely learn to develop binocular vision necessary to catch a ball

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Player with no glove lays down with hands at chest level with arms slightly bent and fingers pointed toward their head
  - Coach drops ball from comfortable height
  - Return ball to coach and repeat
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- Change height as necessary
  - Repeat with glove

## Title: Ball high fingers to the sky

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Skill Set: Learning to catch

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 1 -2 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Appropriate ball and glove

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Goal: To teach younger players correct hand position when catching a hit or thrown ball

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### Description of the Drill

- Instruct player that balls above belly button should be caught with fingers pointed up, thumbs together. Below belly button should be caught with fingers down and pinkies together.
- Demonstrate how high they can reach with fingers up compared to holding glove in a basket catch where they can only reach their chin
- Have them respond with correct position while you are moving ball held in hand both up and down, repeat until they seem to get it
- Preferably using a soft ball lightly toss ball towards players chest or slightly to glove side
- Repeat this throw several times while having them recite **BALL IS HIGH FINGERS TO THE SKY**
- Then let player know you are going to toss lower or maybe even grounders
- Have them recite **BALL IS DOWN FINGERS TO THE GROUND**
- Then mix up throws both high and low correcting as necessary
- Repeat

## Title: Catch like a catcher

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Skill Set: Learning to catch

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per catcher can be a shared drill

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Mini wiffle balls or appropriate balls

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Goal: To get player to move glove hand to the ball. Catching it is a bonus

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### Description of the Drill

- Kid with no glove, squats like a catcher with throwing hand behind back and glove hand outstretched with arm at a slight bend, fingers to the sky
- Coach 5-10 feet away tosses underhand, moving around placement depending on skill level
- Kid catches and drops balls or tosses to side
- Repeat as time allows

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- Ensure finger are pointing up when catching
  - Speed up game as kids get better at drill
  - Use larger wiffle balls and gloves if skill of player allows

## Title: Underhand Toss Catch

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Skill Set: Learning to catch

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 1 or 2 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Jugs lite-flite or tennis ball and glove

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Goal: To get beginning player used to catching a thrown ball

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Explain the benefit of the fingers up/down style of catching. The basket style is more likely to have the ball go off the heel of the glove and hit the player (usually in the face). With fingers up they can reach over their head, they cannot go as high with a basket style catch
  - For two handed catch thumbs should be together when catching above waist. Pinkies together when catching below the waist
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- 
- Player with no glove, player in ready position with glove hand outstretched and fingers up
  - Coach 10 -15 feet away
  - Coach down on throwing side knee underhand tosses ball to player's glove hand. Toss should be from low to high in order to prevent player making a basket style catch attempt
  - Player returns ball by either underhand toss or rolling back to coach depending on skill level
  - Repeat moving throws closer to players body with throws eventually ending up at the players chest
- 
- 
- Repeat with glove
  - Added difficulty would be moving throws to different locations telling player where you will throw before throwing
  - Change distance based on skill level

## Title: Catch With Coach

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Skill Set: Learning to catch

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 1-2 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 – 10 minutes

Equipment Required: Appropriate ball and glove

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Goal: To teach young player how to catch a thrown baseball while trying to reduce their fear of being hit

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Player should have mastered the Underhand Toss drill before doing this drill
  - Most younger kids have not developed binocular vision or depth perception necessary to be able to catch something thrown at them. They will tend to turn their head away from the ball
  - Explain the importance of keeping their eyes on the ball and if necessary to use the glove to protect their face
  - Most younger kids will not be able to close their gloves easily so have them use two hands for this drill
  - Use softer balls until kids get comfortable with this drill. Use a coach except for the most skill players
- 
- 
- Beginning with no glove have player hold out their glove side hand with fingers pointing up
  - Toss ball away from their body to their glove side
  - Once they're successfully repeating skill move to working with glove and throwing hands to trap the ball in the glove
- 
- 
- Added difficulty can be added by throwing to backhand side, without glove first then with glove
  - Additionally you can have them move to ball that is slightly beyond reach



## Title: Underhand Toss or Flip

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Skill Set: Learning to throw

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 2 coaches for station or 6 for clinic

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes for skill or 15 minutes for clinic

Equipment Required: Appropriate balls and glove

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Goal: To ensure younger players don't throw full arm in close situations

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### Description of the Drill

- Describe the conditions in which the underhand toss or flip. Typically used between SS and 2<sup>nd</sup> basemen
  - One graphic example is to pick out a player and while standing less than 10 feet away fake a full arm throw but make sure to grip the ball tightly. The reaction of the player will be to flinch so use this as a reason not to full arm throw when close
  - The second example is to use the same player but gently toss the ball underhand with little to no arc
  - Talk to the players about not wanting to scare or hurt their teammate so a toss is right in certain circumstances
- 
- 
- For station training one coach will roll balls to player at SS who will toss ball to another coach at 2<sup>nd</sup> base
  - For clinic arrange players 8-12 feet off the left hand side of 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> bases in the base path
- 
- 
- To start the drill the coach rolls the ball directly to the player.
  - Player fields the ball properly and moves the ball to the throwing hand and shows the ball to the target coach
  - Player then gets momentum towards target coach by stepping with glove side leg and tosses the ball to the coach by lightly flexing arm and keeping a firm wrist.
- 
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### Coaching points

- While fielding the ball player should create momentum towards partner by stepping towards partner with glove side leg
- Throw should be done with no arc hitting the partner chest high



## Throwing Drills

### Title: 4 Seam Fastball

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Skill Set: Learning to throw

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: Multiple coaches to help kids see a 4 seam fastball grip

Average Time to Complete: 1-2 minutes

Equipment Required: Baseballs, optional baseballs with electrical tape around 4 seam position

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Goal: To teach younger players the proper grip for infield/outfield players as well as pitcher

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#### **Description of the Drill**

- The 4 seam fastball is used by all fielders
  - It has a tendency to run straight when thrown and after it bounces
  - Younger players can use 3 or 4 fingers to grip the ball depending on hand size
  - Make it clear that a fastball has no twist of the hand when thrown
- 
- 
- The correct grip is across the horseshoe stitching with fingers on the stitching and thumb at bottom. The ball should be held tight enough to keep from dropping it, but not so tight that when the arm is lightly hit the ball stays in the hand
  - Teach the players that the last finger to touch the ball when throwing is the middle finger as the ball is pulled down to create backspin.
  - With electrical tape marking the correct position for a 4 seam fastball, there is immediate feedback on each throw
- 
- 
- A game can be played where the players close their eyes and roll the baseball in their hands until they feel the correct grip. Repeat multiple times while the kids race to win.

## Title: Cross legged throwing

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Skill Set: Learning to throw

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 2 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Ball taped across horseshoe and glove

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Goal: To teach throwing a 4 seam fastball

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Kids are about 10 feet from coach and 4 feet apart
  - Begin sitting down with legs in cross-legged position sitting straight up facing partner
  - 4 seam fast ball grip
  - Glove should be closed under throwing side elbow held shoulder high
  - Throw should be an easy toss (flick) focusing on getting backwards spin by rolling ball off middle finger
- 
- 

### **Coaching points**

- Verify good throwing mechanics – 4 seamed fastball, elbow up, hand on top of ball through throw, flicking ball to create backspin.
- Emphasize the middle finger should be the last part of hand to touch the ball

## Title: Two knee throwing

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Skill Set: Learning to throw

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 2 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Ball taped across horseshoe and glove

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Goal: To teach throwing a 4 seam fastball

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Kids are about 10 feet from coach and 4 feet apart
  - Begin on both knees facing partner up high off heels
  - 4 seam grip
  - Target area is within shoulders of coach and between waist and chest
  - Throw should be an easy toss focusing on getting backwards spin
- 
- 

- Increase by length by 5 feet when shorter distance is mastered, repeat as necessary.

### **Coaching points**

- Verify good throwing mechanics – 4 seamed fastball, feed apple to the giant or point cobra away, elbow up, hand on top of ball through throw and follow through.
- Core should be lightly engaged during this drill
- Emphasize the middle finger should be the last part of hand to touch the ball and to get as much backspin as possible

## Title: One knee throwing

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Skill Set: Learning to throw

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 2 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Ball taped across horseshoe and glove

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Goal: To teach throwing a 4 seam fastball with follow through naturally slowing the arm

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### Description of the Drill

- Kids are about 10 feet from coach and 4 feet apart
  - Begin on throwing hand side knee down facing partner, glove side leg towards partner
  - 4 seam fast ball grip
  - Target area is within shoulders of coach and between knees and chest
  - Throw should be an easy toss
  - Chicken wing glove arm, focusing on getting backwards spin (flick) and finishing beyond glove side knee
  - Return ball to player by rolling or throwing depending on skill of players and distance apart
- 
- 
- Increase by length by 5 feet when shorter distance is mastered, repeat as necessary.

### Coaching points

- Verify good throwing mechanics – 4 seamed fastball, elbow up, chicken wing glove arm, hand on top of ball through throw and follow through across glove side knee.
- Emphasize the middle finger should be the last part of hand to touch the ball

## Title: Figure 8 throwing

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Skill Set: Learning to throw

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 2 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Ball taped across horseshoe and glove

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Goal: To teach throwing a 4 seam fastball

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### Description of the Drill

- Kids are about 10 feet from coach and 4 feet apart
  - Begin on both knees in wide stance, facing partner
  - 4 seam fast ball grip
  - Target area is within shoulders of coach and between knees and chest
  - Players will hold ball in throwing hand and draw a figure 8 on its side two times and then rotate upper body slightly back to throwing side to engage the core and then throw the ball. Throwing hand should finish across body to glove side hip.
  - Throw should be an easy toss focusing on getting backwards spin
- 
- 
- Coach rolls or throws back to player to repeat. Coach can do same drill to emphasize proper form when returning ball to players
- 
- 
- Second part of drill is similar.
  - Players stand with wide stance. Feet stay in wide stance there is no leg motion with this drill. It is all upper body.
  - Players will hold ball in throwing hand and draw a figure 8 on its side two times and then rotate upper body slightly back to throwing side to engage the core and then throw the ball. Throwing hand should finish across body to glove side hip.

### Coaching points

- Verify good throwing mechanics – 4 seamed fastball, feed apple to the giant, elbow up, hand on top of ball through throw and follow through.
- Emphasize the middle finger should be the last part of hand to touch the ball
- Core should be engaged when rotating back to throwing side

## Title: Boxer Drill and Jump Backs

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Skill Set: Learning to throw

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 1 – 2 players

Average Time to Complete: 2-3 minutes

Equipment Required: Appropriate ball and gloves

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Goal: To help young players learn to use their legs in the throwing process

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Player in power T position to throw ball with legs about shoulder width apart
- Player moves like a boxer from back to front 2-3 times before throwing during shift from back to front
- Repeat

**Jump backs** are similar except only one move back followed by throwing ball. Use whichever works for each player

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### Coaching points

- Encourage player to feel the different muscle groups involved in this drill
  - Push off with legs ( from ground up)
  - Rotation of trunk and hips for power
  - Back leg rotating to toe in order to release hips
  - Arm coming forward at front foot landing
  - Finishing with chin over knee and slowing arm naturally by letting it cross body to opposite hip



## Title: Power T Position throwing

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Skill Set: Learning to throw

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 2 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Ball taped across horseshoe and glove

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Goal: To teach throwing using equal and opposite elbows in power T position

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### Description of the Drill

- Kids are about 10 feet from coach and 4 feet apart
  - 4 seam fast ball grip
  - Target area is within shoulders of coach and between waist and shoulders
- 
- 
- Power T position has the players/coaches set up facing each other
    - First player turns with glove side shoulder pointed at partner
    - Player steps a little over shoulder width towards the partner, pulling ball out of glove at waist and raising arms in a circular fashion (similar to an orchestra conductor). You can also use the: "Stick'em up" analogy to get the elbows and hands up.
    - Front elbow pointed towards partner and back elbow shoulder height. Ball should be pointed back (towards second base if pitching from mound). **Verbal cue is "point the cobra away from you"**. Have player stop in this position for evaluation. Arms and hands should be equal and opposite.
    - Player then uses only arm and upper body to make the throw keeping hand above ball through the throw. Glove side should end up in a chicken wing position near throwing side hip
  - Throw should be an easy toss focusing on getting backwards spin. Feet should not move from power position
  - Coach rolls or throws back to player to repeat. Coach can do same drill to emphasize proper form when returning ball to player
- 
- 
- When players have skill down you can use the following to improve accuracy;
    - Create a target on fence using rope threaded through fence. Adjust size of target based on skill. Players stand 15 feet away and score points for hitting target. 1 point for each hit
    - Place ball on Tee near fence, player 15 feet from target, 1 point for hitting tee, 3 points for hitting ball
- 
-

- 
- 
- Coaching points
    - Feet just over shoulder width
    - Front shoulder pointed towards target
    - Ball pulled out of glove in circular fashion, down and out/up
    - Elbows shoulder high – front elbow pointed at target, back elbow in opposite direction (not over twisting upper body)
    - Throwing hand 4 seam grip with hand on top of ball and ball pointed away from player (point the cobra away)
    - Glove side ends in chicken wing near front hip. Throwing hand crosses body and ends up near front hip

## Title: Rope Target on Fence

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Skill Set: Learning to throw

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 1-2 athletes

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: 8-10 foot length of ¼ inch rope, balls and glove

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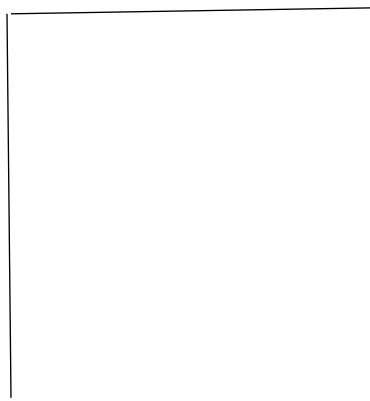
Goal: To provide player with chance to throw as hard as they want with no fear of hurting another player while developing accuracy

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Make a 3 sided rectangular target on fence with rope about 2 feet wide and top of target about 40 inches above ground. Just loop the rope around fence at top corners similar to the diagram below. No need to close up bottom
- Have player start at 10 feet away and increase distance by 5 feet after succeeding 5 times
- Make sure that if using more than one player that each player stays back while the other is throwing. Sometimes they forget in the heat of competition



## Title: Shuffle Throw

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Skill Set: Learning to throw

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 2 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Ball taped across horseshoe and glove

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Goal: To teach throwing using equal and opposite hands in power T position and completing throw by shuffle and throw

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### Description of the Drill

- Kids are about 10 feet from coach and 4 feet apart
- Target area is within shoulders of coach and between waist and shoulders

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- Player facing coach
- Coach tosses ball to player in an easy underhand fly ball or roll grounders
- Player turns with glove side shoulder pointed at partner
- Player shuffles feet towards the partner, pulling ball out of glove at waist and raising arms in a circular fashion (similar to an orchestra conductor). You can also use the: "Stick'em up" analogy to get the elbows and hands up.
- Front elbow pointed towards partner and back elbow shoulder height. Hand should be on top of ball.
- Ball should be pointed back (towards second base if pitching from mound). **Verbal cue is "point the cobra away from you".**
- Player then throws ball back to partner/coach Glove side should end up in a chicken wing position between glove side hip and arm pit
- Throw should be an easy toss focusing on getting backwards spin.
- Follow ball several steps after throw
- Coach rolls or throws back to player to repeat.

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- When players have skill down you can use the following to improve accuracy;
  - Create a target on fence using rope threaded through fence. Adjust size of target based on skill. Players stand 15 feet away and score points for hitting target. 1 point for each hit
  - Coach rolls or tosses ball to simulate hit from home so player will have to rotate body to left as if throwing to first base

- Place ball on Tee near fence, player 15 feet from target, 1 point for hitting tee, 3 points for hitting ball
  - Or can be ran as a team drill with throws to coach or player at first base
- 
- Coaching points
    - Feet just over shoulder width
    - Front shoulder pointed towards target
    - Ball pulled out of glove in circular fashion
    - Elbows shoulder high – front elbow pointed at target, back elbow in opposite direction (not over twisting upper body)
    - Throwing hand 4 seam grip with hand on top of ball and ball pointed away from player
    - Glove side ends in chicken wing near front hip. Throwing hand crosses body and ends up near front hip

## Title: Throwing Golf

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Skill Set: Learning to throw

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 2-3 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Cones, balls and gloves

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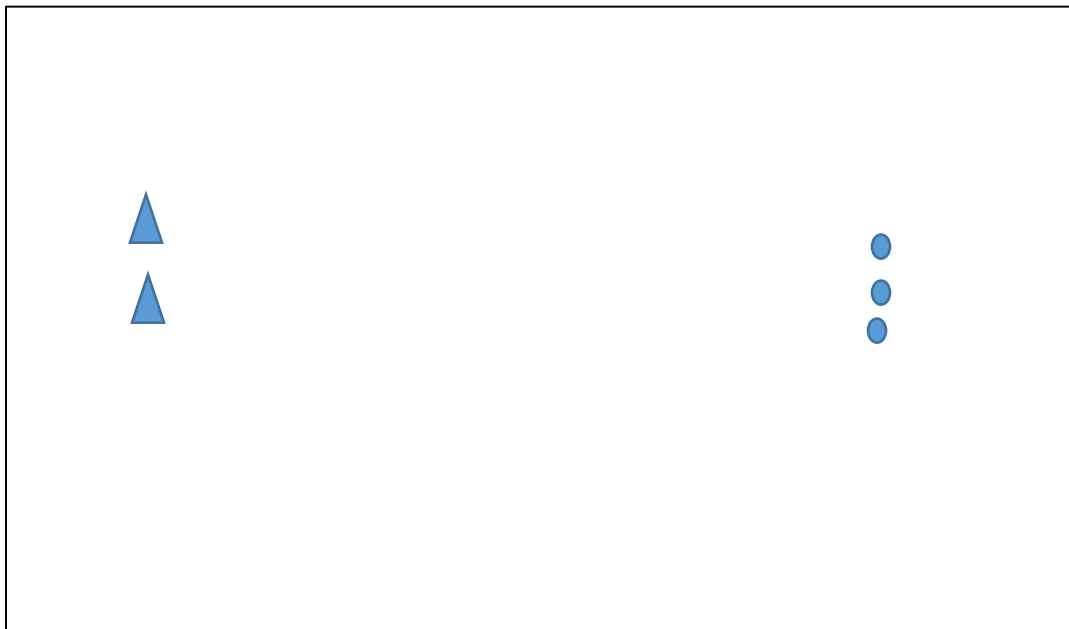
Goal: To simulate long toss without partner while competing for best score

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Place 2 cones about 1 - 3 feet apart in line players will be throwing from.
- Distance is determined by skill of players make it challenging but not impossible
- Players take turns throwing and attempting to go between cones in the air or on the ground
- Each player takes one throw, then waits for the others to complete their throw before coach returns balls
- Repeat as time allows



## Title: Underhand Toss or Flip

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Skill Set: Learning to throw

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 2 coaches for station or 6 for clinic

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes for skill or 15 minutes for clinic

Equipment Required: Appropriate balls and glove

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Goal: To ensure younger players don't throw full arm in close situations

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Describe the conditions in which the underhand toss or flip. Typically used between SS and 2<sup>nd</sup> basemen
  - One graphic example is to pick out a player and while standing less than 10 feet away fake a full arm throw but make sure to grip the ball tightly. The reaction of the player will be to flinch so use this as a reason not to full arm throw when close
  - The second example is to use the same player but gently toss the ball underhand with little to no arc
  - Talk to the players about not wanting to scare or hurt their teammate so a toss is right in certain circumstances
- 
- 
- To start the drill the coach is about 10 feet off and inside of first base with cone placed about 10 feet from coach between coach and player playing second base
  - Coach rolls grounder or short hop to player
  - Player fields the ball properly and moves the ball to the throwing hand and shows the ball to the coach while running towards coach and underhand tosses to coach when reaching cone, then circles around coach before returning to initial position
- 
- 

### Coaching points

- While tossing the ball player should create momentum towards partner by stepping towards partner with glove side leg
- Throw should be done with no arc hitting the partner chest high

## Title: Upper Body Throwing

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Skill Set: Learning to throw

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 1-2 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Appropriate balls and glove

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Goal: Focus on using core with emphasis on extension and strong glove side

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### **Description of the Drill**

- This is a modified version of the USA Baseball Mobile Coach App  
[https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Upper\\_Body\\_Throwing.pdf](https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Upper_Body_Throwing.pdf)
- Modifications
  - Coach acts as partner for player
  - Describe the proper placement of feet
    - Throwing side or back leg at about 35 – 45 degrees to partner
    - Glove side leg pointed at and extended toward partner (starting with throwing side planted take one big step (not giant step) towards partner.
  - Describe arm and throwing motion
    - Upper body rotates back and arms in power position
    - Throwing arm comes forward as chest moves to glove and glove side arm ends in chicken wing
    - Aiming for partner between waist and chest
    - Throwing arm finishes across body and ends over glove side hip

See video on USA Baseball Mobile Coach App



## Title: Throwing warmups

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Skill Set: Learning to catch

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 1-2 players or player to player if skilled

Average Time to Complete: 20 minutes

Equipment Required: Appropriate balls and gloves

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Goal: To progress through a warmup of various throwing drill

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### Description of the Drill

**This is a warmup consisting of multiple drills in progression**

- **4 Seam Fastball Grip**
  - **Cross Legged throwing drill – 10 throws - focus on grip, high throwing elbow and backspin**
  - **Two Knee throwing drill – 10 throws - focus on grip, high throwing elbow and backspin**
  - **Two Knee figure 8 drill – 10 throws - focus on grip, high throwing elbow, backspin and engaging core**
  - **One Knee throwing drill – 10 throws - focus on grip, high throwing elbow, chicken wing glove arm, backspin and finish across glove side knee**
  - **Standing Figure 8 drill – 10 throws - focus on grip, high throwing elbow, backspin and engaging core**
  - **Power T Position drill – 10 throws - focus on back ankle position, front side of body position, equal and opposite elbows, grip, high throwing elbow, engaging core, backspin and finish across body**
- 

**If skill of players is up to it add the next drill**

- **Catch Step and throw with coach - focus on grip, stepping to catch on glove side leg then rotating back foot into position, separation of hands, equal and opposite hands, high throwing elbow, engaging core, backspin and finish low across body with chin over knees**

## Infield Drills

### Title: Defensive Position Game

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Skill Set: Infield

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach and several assistant in infield and outfield

Average Time to Complete: 5-20 minutes

Equipment Required: Circles drawn at infield position and cones marking outfield position

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Goal: To teach young players where to go for defensive positions

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#### **Description of the Drill**

- Layout infield and outfield positions with drawn circles and or cones
- Returning players will play a key role on this drill because they probably know the location of the positions
- Have kids around home plate face outfield and follow around as you show the positions for the infielders
- Explain that when playing a “base” that the runner has the right to the base and that the baseman can only be on the base if waiting for the ball or tagging the base with the ball in their glove or hand. So infielders stand to the side of the base and usually behind the base line
- Return to home plate. Call out a position and have the kids run to that location as a group
- Repeat for each base in order, then mix it up
- Return to home plate. Tell them that they way to tell which outfield position is which, is to look out from home plate, The left side looking out is left field, the right side is right field and the middle is center field. Not all of beginning players will know their right and left sides. Have them run to different outfield positions as a group by mixing it up
- The next progression is to have individual players go to different positions with coaches assisting

## Title: Beginner Grounders

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Skill Set: Infield

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 1-3 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Jugs lite-flite, tennis or baseballs and gloves

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Goal: To teach the beginning player how to receive a grounder

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Players about 10 feet from each other
  - Player on knees should make a triangle or arrow point when in fielding position from both feet to outstretched glove. Coach should aim for point of triangle.
  - Player should be upright (off butt), bending at waist, back flat not arched with glove extended to arrow point and glove fingers pointed down and top hand in alligator position to help stop ball in glove
  - Coach should underhand roll ball to point of arrow
  - Players should roll or toss ball back to coach depending on skill and spacing of other players
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- 
- Next progression would be to rotate player to glove side,
  - Next progression would be rotate player to backhand side
  - Next progression would be for players to stand with feet just over shoulder width apart in fielding position. Make new arrow point for this position
  - This drill can be done with 2 players rolling to each other if their skill level is up for it

## Title: Bobble drill

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Skill Set: Infield

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach to 1-3 kids

Average Time to Complete: 5 Minutes

Equipment Required: Jugs lite-flite, tennis or baseballs and glove

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Goal: To get players used to picking up a dead ball with their throwing hand rather than the glove

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### **Description of the Drill**

- At the command “Ready” the kids should get into the infield ready position. Similar to a basketball player guarding someone. Arms should be out and relaxed with thumbs up.
  - At the “Set” command the kids should start some movement so they are not flatfooted.
  - The coach will roll the ball to them
  - The kids will move to the ball and put their mitt down with the back of the mitt facing the ball to simulate a bobble. They should pick up the ball with their throwing hand and throw back to the coach.
- 
- Let the players know the reason behind this.
    - It is very hard to pick up a ball with a glove that has stopped rolling during game pressure
    - For a young player it may take a full second to transfer from glove to throwing hand which is about 3 steps for a runner
    - If they slap the ball backwards trying to field with the glove it could end up a long ways away from them

## Title: Fast – Fast – Slow – Shuffle – Shuffle Throw

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Skill Set: Infield

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 2 kids or 2-3 coaches for team drill

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes or 10 as team drill

Equipment Required: Appropriate balls and glove

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Goal: Teach to attack the ball under control and move in direction of throw

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### **Description of the Drill**

- This drill is to teach the kids how to develop the skills as an infielder to attack the ball while maintaining balance through fielding and keep the feet moving through the throw.
- Begin using dead ball, then slow rollers and can follow up with bouncing balls depending on skill. Have coach play first base to begin with and progressing to better players playing first over course of season.
- This is a combination of two different catch phrases. It makes a simple rhyme that is catchy and simple for the kids to remember
- The two catch phrases are “Fast – Slow- Fast and Field- Shuffle-Shuffle-Throw”
- Here is the key rhyme that combines those two
  - Fast – Fast
  - Slow
  - Shuffle – Shuffle
  - Throw
- This is how it translates to the act of fielding a ball and making the throw
  - Fast – Fast (Move quickly to attack the ball)
  - Slow (Slow down and break down to keep balance while fielding with right-left steps)
  - Shuffle – Shuffle (turn body to get in correct position and move towards target base)
  - Throw (Throw to base and follow ball several steps)
- Team drill
  - Coach at first base
  - Players at either SS or 2<sup>nd</sup> base
  - Coach about 15 – 20 feet from players
  - Coach rolls or bounces ball to player

- Player fields ball correctly and turns to get body in position to throw ( front shoulder pointed toward 1<sup>st</sup> base then shuffle - shuffle – throw
- Coach at 1<sup>st</sup> puts ball in bucket or returns to coach rolling grounders
- Point out successes and encourage the kids repeating FAST – FAST – SLOW – SHUFFLE - SHUFFLE – THROW

## Title: Grounders

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Skill Set: Infield

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 2 athletes or 2 players together

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Appropriate balls and gloves

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Goal: Stay low, charge the ball, stay under control to field the ball in front of the body

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### **Description of the Drill**

See the following link: <https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Grounders.pdf>

See the video in the USA Baseball Mobile Coach App

## Title: Infield Movement drill

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Skill Set: Infield

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per team helpers as necessary

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Baseball and Gloves

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Goal: To teach players a pre-pitch or hit routine

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Line up kids facing coach.
- At the command "Ready" the kids should get into the infield ready position. Similar to a basketball player guarding someone. Arms should be out and relaxed with thumbs up.
- At the "Set" command the players should start some movement so they are not flatfooted.
- At the command "FIELD" the coach will hold up a baseball in the direction the players should move
- Begin with one step until they get it, moving to 3 steps and eventually 5 steps.
- Players return to starting position and repeat drill



## Title: Knee Short Hops

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Skill Set: Infield

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach for 1 or 2 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minute

Equipment Required: Appropriate Ball and glove

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Goal: To increase repetitions of short hops and make the players comfortable stopping the ball

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### **Description of the Drill**

- This drill is a modified version of the USA Baseball Mobile Coach drill [https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Knee\\_Short\\_Hops.pdf](https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Knee_Short_Hops.pdf)
- The modifications are that a coach is used to feed the players and progression will be slower than shown in the video
- Coach and player about 10 feet apart or a little closer if needed. Player on their knees up high off of heels
- Coach can underhand or overhand toss depending on skill of player
- A baseball can be used for younger players if tosses are soft and accurately thrown

See video on USA Baseball Mobile Coach app “Knee Short Hops”

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- Coaching notes
  - Player stays high off heels bending at waist with flat back
  - Player maintains arm with slight bend, soft hands and firm wrist (not slapping at ball)
  - For backhand, head should be behind ball with elbow pointed in direction of ball trying to catch in webbing to prevent the ball from bouncing out of glove

## Title: Short hop drill

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Skill Set: Infield

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 1-3 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Jugs lite-flite, tennis or baseballs and gloves

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Goal: To teach the beginning player how to receive a short hop

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### **Description of the Drill**

- The kids will begin by getting in low fielding position and short hopping the ball to themselves across their body. They should concentrate on putting fingers down and getting the ball in the glove as close to the hop as possible using a soft hands but firm wrist technique so they absorb the ball rather than slapping or stabbing at it
  - Next progression is coach about 10 feet away underhand tossing short hops straight to players.
    - Player should make a triangle or arrow point when in fielding position from both feet to outstretched glove. Coach should lightly underhand toss aiming for about 3 -6 inches beyond point of triangle.
    - Enforce that player is not to catch ball until after it hits the ground
    - Players should roll or toss ball back to coach depending on skill and spacing of other players
- 
- 
- Next progression would be to glove side,
  - Next progression would be backhand side
  - This drill can be done with 2 players tossing to each other if their skill level is up for it

See the USA Baseball Mobile Coach App “Short Hop” Drill for video that shows partners running drill

## Title: Count the hops drill

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Skill Set: Infield

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per team or 2 players per coach

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes or 10 if team drill

Equipment Required: Baseball (appropriate for skill level) and Gloves

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Goal: To teach players to focus on a hit ball

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Single or double line, players facing coach. (shortstop or second base or both)
  - At the command "Ready" the kids should get into the infield ready position. Similar to a basketball player guarding someone. Arms should be out and relaxed with thumbs up.
  - At the "Set" command the players should start some movement so they are not flatfooted.
  - The coach about 30 feet from players tosses a bouncing ball
  - Player moves to field ball while counting number of hops
  - Players yells out number of hops
  - Return ball to coach and then go to back of line or opposite line
- 
- 
- Have fun with this one bounce some high especially if using softer balls
  - Short hop some to players that can handle it

## Title: Underhand Circle Toss Circle Game

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Skill Set: Infield

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach and several assistants to help with passed

Average Time to Complete: 5 – 10 minutes

Equipment Required: Appropriate balls and gloves

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Goal: To teach young players to turn to glove side when playing cutoff

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Have kids start out in circle around pitcher's mound touching fingers. Then have them back up a few steps at a time until they are 5 – 8 feet apart
  - Have assistants positioned around to help on passed balls
  - Explain to players that they should turn to glove side to keep momentum and to provide power
  - While facing into middle have kids turn to the left. The ball will then be tossed in a counter clockwise direction. (kids will have no idea what that means due to digital clocks) make sure they know which direction to go in,
  - Players will rotate to glove side making an underhand toss to next player
  - If a player makes a bad toss or a player drops a well tossed ball they will have to run around circle before the ball makes it around. Give some leeway here.
  - At some point reverse direction and continue game
- 
- Added difficulty – add one or more balls to circle spaced evenly
  - Coaching points
    - Ball needs to be pulled out of glove as soon as possible and be shown to partner
    - Players need to be shown how to toss underhand, Firm wrist while stepping toward partner with glove side leg. Toss need to be at chest of partner and not looping

## Outfield Drills

### Title: Bleacher Ball Drop

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Skill Set: Learning to catch

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per player

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Bucket, Bleachers or ladder, Jugs Lite-Flite balls or tennis balls and glove

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Goal: To get players to understand how to catch a fly ball with 2 hands

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#### Description of the Drill

- **Player with glove stands behind top row of bleachers or ladder**
- **Player has glove in position to catch fly ball - overhead with fingers pointed up, thumbs together with non-glove hand on thumb side of glove**
- **Coach at top of bleachers or ladder drops ball aiming for glove**
- **Player catches ball and uses non-glove hand to secure ball in glove**
- **Player drops ball in bucket and resets to catch again**

## Title: Crow Hops

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Skill Set: Outfield

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach for 1-2 players or 2 players together

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Appropriate balls and gloves

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Goal: To teach younger players the importance of getting momentum when throwing from the outfield

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Explain that the crow hop is an outfield version of shuffling to the place they want to throw to get the most power generated by the legs to help the throw go further
  - Demonstrate by coach fielding dead ball and rotating towards target then replacing front foot with back foot. Make sure not to over exaggerate a shoulder tilt because the kids will naturally tend to drop the back shoulder when throwing far.
- 
- 
- Start the drill using a dead ball
  - Player fields ball, then rotates to point front shoulder to partner.
  - Player then shuffles feet by replacing front foot with back foot while throwing the ball as the front foot lands. Make sure player keeps elbows shoulder high and equal and opposite while throwing
  - After they have the basic movement down use slow rollers making sure they use correct fielding procedure as well as incorporating the crow hop. If they are slow returning ball to partner count the seconds to speed them up

See the USA Baseball Mobile Coach App video for Crow Hops (there are versions for both infield and outfield, the infield version of the drill does not include a throw)

## Title: Fly Balls

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Skill Set: Outfield

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 2 athletes or 2 players together

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Appropriate balls and gloves

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Goal: Move to get under the ball and catch the ball in front of the bill of the cap

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### Description of the Drill

See the following link: [https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Fly\\_Balls.pdf](https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Fly_Balls.pdf)

See the video in the USA Baseball Mobile Coach App

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**Additional step for younger players would be to emphasize catching the ball while stepping with the front foot and after catching turning the back foot into throwing position. This is part of the catch-step – throw sequence. Have them keep moving their feet to ensure they learn to time the ball being caught. This will reduce the number of steps they take after fielding a fly ball.**

## Title: Move to Ball

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Skill Set: Outfield

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 2 coaches for 2-4 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Baseball and gloves

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Goal: To teach beginning outfielders to run after ball but concede the ball to the first one to get to it

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Younger player will either ignore a ball not hit right at them or a gang will chase the ball down creating a dogpile on the ball
  - This drill will try to improve the response of the players to get to the ball while allowing the player that gets to it first to get the ball
- 
- Instruct the players that when a ball is hit between outfielders it is both of their responsibility
  - But the ball belongs to the player that gets to the ball first
  - That player then has the responsibility to get the ball back to the cutoff coach as soon as possible
  - Coach throws ball low and between players
  - Players run to get ball
  - Player that gets the ball returns ball to cutoff coach
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### **Coaching points**

- Ensure players do not fight for ball but do try to get it
- In order to create a sense of urgency if ball being returned is slow use a loud seconds count to have them compete for best time back to cutoff



## Title: Outfield Communication

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Skill Set: Outfield

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 1-6 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 – 15 minutes

Equipment Required: Appropriate balls and gloves, tennis racquet

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Goal: Communicate with each other, call for the ball, and back each other up

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### Description of the Drill

**For younger players modify drill to use tennis ball racquet and lighter or softer balls from a closer distance. Maybe throwing rather than hitting in beginning practices**

**Talk to younger players about the danger of collisions when there is a lack of communication**

**Younger players need to have constant reminders that not every ball is theirs and they should let the other player have it if the other player calls is. Coach can start the correct behavior by throwing/hitting in direction of player while calling their name and having them say MINE MINE MINE while other player says YOU YOU YOU**

**See the following link:**

[https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Outfield\\_Communication.pdf](https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Outfield_Communication.pdf)

**See the video in the USA Baseball Mobile Coach App**

## Title: Outfield Grounders

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Skill Set: Outfield

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 2 athletes or 2 players together

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Appropriate balls and gloves

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Goal: 1stRotation-Field the ball down on one knee, 2ndRotation-Field the ball on the run \_\_\_\_\_

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**Description of the Drill**

**See the following link:**

[https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Outfield\\_Groundballs.pdf](https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Outfield_Groundballs.pdf)

**See the video in the USA Baseball Mobile Coach App**

## Title: Tandem - Communication

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Skill Set: Outfield

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 1-6 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 – 15 minutes

Equipment Required: Appropriate balls and gloves, tennis racquet

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Goal: Communicate with each other, call for the ball, and back each other up

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### Description of the Drill

**For younger players modify drill to use tennis ball racquet and lighter or softer balls from a closer distance**

**Talk to younger players about the danger of collisions when there is a lack of communication**

**Younger players need to have constant reminders that not every ball is theirs and they should let the other player have it if the other player calls is. Coach can start the correct behavior by hitting in direction of player while calling their name and having them say MINE MINE MINE while other player says YOU YOU YOU**

**See the following link: <https://playball.newstartmobile.com/content/PlayBall/PDF/Tandem.pdf>**

**See the video in the USA Baseball Mobile Coach App**

## Title: Wiffle Ball Popups

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Skill Set: Learning to catch

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 1-3 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Regular wiffle balls, Jugs Lite-Flite, tennis balls or T-balls with or without glove, possibly a tennis racquet

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Goal: To teach players how to catch an easy popup fly

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### Description of the Drill

- **Player 15 – 20 feet from coach**
  - **Coach throws an easy popup such that player can easily get under the ball**
  - **Player returns ball to coach and goes to starting position**
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- 
- **Start with wiffle balls or tennis balls and progress to Jugs Lite-Flite balls or T-Balls depending on skill of player**
  - **Can use tennis racquet to get higher or longer pop flies**
  - **Adjust the drill to challenge the different skill levels of younger players**
  - **When using as a station you can separate the players and work on outfield communication or make a game where score is kept**

## Title: Wiffle Ball Quarterbacks

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Skill Set: Learning to catch

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per 1-3 players

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Regular wiffle balls, Jugs Lite-Flite, tennis balls or T-balls with or without glove

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Goal: To teach players how to catch a ball on the run

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### Description of the Drill

- **Teach players that running on balls of feet is important to keep eyes from jiggling causing loss of focusing on the ball**
- **Instruct players not to run with glove extended until last second before catching ball. It slows down running**
- **Player 5 feet from coach tosses ball to coach and goes out for pass**
- **Coach throws an easy fly to forehand side such that player can easily get under the ball**
- **Player returns to starting position**

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- 
- **Start with wiffle balls or tennis balls and progress to Jugs Lite-Flite balls or T-Balls depending on skill of player**
  - **Can also throw to backhand side for more skilled players**

# Running

## Title: Teaching Kids to Run

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**Skill Set:** Running

**Difficulty Level:** Beginner

**Number of Athletes and Coaches:** 1 coach

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**Average Time to Complete:** 15 minutes

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**Equipment Required:** Cones

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**Goal:** To provide younger players the how and whys of running properly

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Running the bases is an explosive exercise, they will go from zero to top speed in less than 30 feet
- Arm motion is almost as important as leg motion, make sure the arms are kept bent about 90 degrees and pump from “hip to lip” or “cheek to cheek”.(not cross body as about 1/3 of beginning players will start out doing).
- Also hands should be closed but not tightly. Imagine holding a small bird while running
- The faster the arms move the faster the legs go
- Sitting while pumping arms with power and objective of actually lifting butt off the ground is a decent drill
- Leg motion starts out with short choppy steps and body slightly tilted. Stride lengthens and body becomes more upright at top speed
  - High forward knee drive and then straighten back leg to get max power
  - When forward knee goes high opposite arm goes back
  - All sprinting is done on toes or balls of feet. Flat footed or heel dropping loses power and momentum
- Running in place can help you see an arm motion defect, high knees and running on toes and correct them properly.
- Drills to use
  - Sitting arm pumps
  - Running in place
  - Butt kicks
  - Parade march on tip toes
  - Explosion - Cones about 10 - 15 feet apart have players do jumps between cones to teach explosive power
  - Takeoff speed - Cones about 15 feet apart have players sprint from cone to cone to teach starting explosion, walk back and repeat

- Finishing speed - Start at 3<sup>rd</sup> base line set cones about ½ way to line between and at line between first and second base. Players jog to cones then sprint to next line

## Title: Run Through First Base

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Skill Set: Running

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 2 coaches per team

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Bases, cones

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Goal: To teach players that it is OK to pass first base and not to slow down until after touching first base

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Place 2 cones about 6 to 8 feet past first base one the infield side the other about 5 feet to the foul side
- Explain to players that if they stop on the base it means they are slowing down before reaching the base.
- Also explain that first base and home are the only bases they can overrun as long as they don't make an effort to go to second.
- Explain the stop at base or hold sign is by arms raised by first base coach at first base
- Demonstrate in slow motion running to first base and passing the base, followed by breaking down and slowing down while turning around the foul cone and returning to first base.
- Demonstrate at full speed.
- Have players form a line behind home plate with one coach directing the start for each player with the other near first base encouraging them to run through then break down and turn back to base
- Have player that runs to first go back to line at home by going along first base fence to prevent collisions
- Coach at first should be located where first base coach would normally be. This coach will be the starter to ensure last runner is clear
- Coach at home will ensure that the runners do not cheat past home plate before starting
- For added excitement you can use a stop watch (one is in USA Baseball Mobile Coach App) to time each runner
- Advanced running – Start with short choppy steps then going to longer stride. Arm movement should be thumb from hip to lip or cheek to cheek with arms held in an L shape. Explain that if they are swinging arms from side to side they are fighting their body resulting in slower speed. Usually about 1/3 to 1/2 of the younger players will move arms incorrectly.



## Title: Race – First to First

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Skill Set: Running

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 2 coaches per team

Average Time to Complete: 5 – 10 minutes

Equipment Required: Cones and first base

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Goal: As one line starts ahead of the other the lead runner will act like a pacer or rabbit for the other runner

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### Description of the Drill

- Set up 2 cones 3 feet apart about 6 feet to the foul side of home plate and back 10 feet.
- Use a throw down plate as an additional first base placed 6 feet to the foul side of first base
- Have half the team lineup behind home, the other half behind the cones
- Give command ready set go and players should race to their base running through the base.
- Runners should go back to opposite line by running along the fence. Be careful here because many will run back at the next runners

Title: Race Second to Home Home to second.

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Skill Set: Running

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 2 coaches per team

Average Time to Complete: 5 – 10 minutes

Equipment Required: Bases

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Goal: A game which players compete against another for fun while learning to run

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Have half the team lineup behind home, the other half to the right field side of second base
  - Give command ready set go and players should race to either second or home.
  - Player not actively racing should stand back 10 feet from their base. Coaches need to enforce this to prevent collisions
- 
- 
- Tell players that the best runners will round the bases to keep up their speed through turns
  - Another variation would be to run home to home and second to second as a relay race (coach should ensure players clear the base area after finishing their run)

## Title: Dodge Ball

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Skill Set: Running

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 2-4 coaches depending on if one or two lines

Average Time to Complete: \_\_\_\_\_

Equipment Required: Jugs Lite Flite balls or soft playground ball and bases

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Goal: To teach players that if they are touched by a hit ball they will be out and how to avoid being hit

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### Description of the Drill

- Tell players that when running the bases if not on the base and if they are touched by a hit ball they will be out.
- Also tell them if they are in the base path and hit by a thrown ball they are not automatically out
- Set up one line starting at first base and if running two lines another line at second. Players waiting for a turn should be 10 feet behind the base to prevent collisions
- **Players should be wearing helmets for this drill**
- One coach will be rolling/throwing balls the other will be shagging the balls and returning them
- The coach will yell GO! And the runner should start to run while keeping an eye on the ball direction
- The coach 20-30 feet from base path rolls the ball switching from avoiding and trying to interfere with runners
- The runner should slow down, stop, jump or duck to avoid the ball
- After completing rolling move to underhand bouncing balls

## Team Games

### Title: Basics of Baseball

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Skill Set: Team Games

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 3 – 4 coaches

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Bases, balls, bats

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Goal: To teach beginning players the basic baseball field and rules

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#### **Description of the Drill**

- This is a rudimentary explanation of the field, the rules and how to get an out
- The field
  - Offense versus defense – offensive team is up at bat – defensive team in the field
  - Home plate – Where the batter stands to hit and when runs are scored when a runner crosses it legally. The batter's box will need to be scratched out with a bat since the field will not be marked
  - 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base lines/ fair and foul ball and what happens for each
  - Running the bases – 1<sup>st</sup> and home are the only bases that can be overran
- Outs –
  - Tagged out – runner is off base and is tagged with ball in hand or glove of defensive player
  - Runner not on a base is touched by a hit ball, but not a thrown ball
  - Force out – defensive player with ball touches base while being forced to run
    - Out at 1<sup>st</sup> if defensive tags base while holding ball before runner gets there. Reinforce the fact that there is always a force out a 1<sup>st</sup> base every time the ball is hit
    - Grounder hit with man on 1<sup>st</sup> and defensive player fields ball and tags 2<sup>nd</sup> base
    - Runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> and defensive player tags base while holding ball before runner reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> base
    - Runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and defensive player tags base while holding ball before runner reaches home
  - 2 runners on the same base
  - Runner behind passes lead runner
  - Fly out – Defensive player catches ball before it hits the ground
  - Runner interferes with defensive player fielding the ball
  - Batter throws the bat multiple times during a game
- Defensive Interference – Defensive player blocks runner on the base path while not fielding or holding the ball – runner gets awarded next base

## Title: Live Tee or Coach Pitch Scrimmage

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Skill Set: Team Games

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: at least 4 coaches

Average Time to Complete: 20 -30 minutes

Equipment Required: Tee, bucket of appropriate balls, cones and gloves

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Goal: To have players play a practice game with friendly competition

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Split team in two groups, 1 group is up and other plays in field
- One coach pitching or placing balls on tee, one catching, several in outfield
- Scrimmage is game rules excepts hits through to outfield count as doubles
- Coaches in outfield should help fielders with where the play is and keep them engaged
- After every offensive player completes their turn the sides switch

## Title: Not in My Backyard

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Skill Set: Team Games

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: Several coaches for team

Average Time to Complete: 5 10 minutes

Equipment Required: Cones and 15-30 very soft balls Lite Flite or similar Gloves are optional

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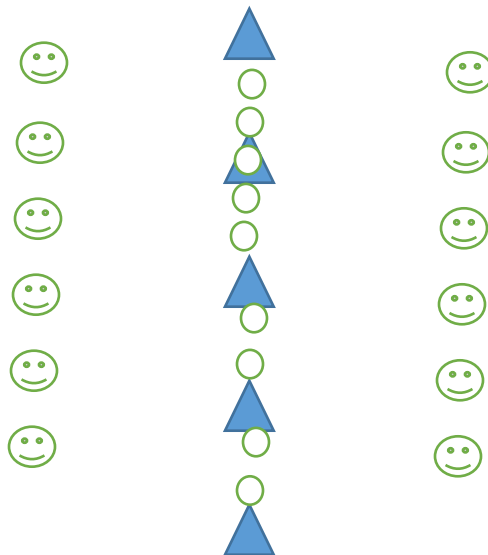
Goal: This game serves to have players learn to throw ball from where they get it and to throw with power

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### Description of the Drill

- Goal is to have the fewest number of balls left on your side (backyard) at end of timer
- Set up a line of cones in center field, Place balls along line
- Split up team evenly on each side back 10 feet from line
- On go players start throwing balls as far as they can to the other side of field
- Run timer for 1 minute
- Team with fewest balls on their side wins
- Emphasize throwing from where they pick up the ball, If using gloves ensure players do not pick up ball with their glove



## Warmups

Title: Jog the bases

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Skill Set: Warmups

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach per team

Average Time to Complete: 3 minutes

Equipment Required: Bases

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Goal: To have younger players warm up by jogging

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### **Description of the Drill**

- Most young players when running together will end up in a foot race. The coach should lead this drill with the rule no one passes the coach to maintain a jog.
- Mark out the path for rounding first base with either cones or scratching out path with a bat
- Jog the bases emphasizing rounding first base
- Have the payers yell out the base as they touch it.
- Repeat one more time. Then coach can back off and let the kids run another lap or two

## Practice Equipment

### Title: Practice equipment

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Skill Set: Hitting

Difficulty Level: Beginner

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1 coach

Average Time to Complete: 0 Minutes

Equipment Required: See Below

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Goal: To help new coaches with practice equipment

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- Throw down home plates
  - Used for placement of kids during warmups as well as for dry swings to teach position in relation to base
  - Can be made from plastic carpet runner material available at most home improvement stores.
  - Use tee base to cut out shapes
- Homemade Tees
  - Similar to Tanner Tees coast about \$20 per pair
  - See numerous YouTube videos on how to build – Google “homemade tee”
- Ball on a rope
  - Used for Tee work/drills minimizes need for nets or chasing balls
  - Requires 5/16 inch hole drilled in ball and about 15 feet of ¼ inch rope
  - Burn ends of rope, one end should be pointed to go through hole
  - Double knot rope at end of ball as well as single knot just before ball to prevent it from traveling up rope
  - Create loop on other end to fit over Tee
- Jugs Lite Flite Balls
  - About \$15 for 6 from Academy Sports (in store) or under \$35 per dozen from Amazon or Dicks
- Tennis Balls
  - Can be used in place of Jugs Lite Flite Balls
  - Used ones can be found at Play it Again Sports
- Wiffle Balls
- Soft hands or pancake gloves
  - Use to teach two hand fielding/catching
  - Can buy or make out of foam padding or wood and elastic straps



- Mini or golf wiffle balls
  - Great for development of hitting skills
  - Also used for some catching drills
- Soccer cones
  - Useful for marking out path to follow, start/stop lines targets and other uses
- Beach balls or other large soft balls
  - Use to teach basic tracking skills for new players