



**Whitby Minor Baseball
Association
House League Coaching Manual
16u to 21u**

16u to 21u Coaching Manual contents

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Whitby Minor Baseball Association

House League Coaching Manual

This manual is intended to provide information and assistance to help you in your goal of becoming a better baseball coach.

I am sure we all agree that our collective goal is to promote the growth of baseball in Whitby. By volunteering to coach you are helping us towards meeting this goal! By providing better coaching, our players will benefit that much more, and in turn will become better players.

Whether you are coaching for the first time, or you are a returning coach, the first step to becoming a better coach is to understand that no matter how long you have been coaching, you will never stop learning. Please use this manual, along with the knowledge you already possess, to promote a fun filled and educational program that each of your players will enjoy.

In addition to the resources provided here, if you would like help contact your convener to arrange for someone to visit at a practice and/or game as available.

Have a great season, and thank you to your commitment towards better baseball in Whitby!



Baseball Links

Below, you will find links that will also provide information to help you become a better coach. Please use the information you find on any of these websites wisely, with the understanding that some of the information may be too advanced for your particular age group.

Whitby Minor Baseball Association
<http://www.whitbyminorbaseball.ca>

Eastern Ontario Baseball Association
<http://www.eoba.net>

Ontario Baseball Association
<http://www.ondeck.baseballontario.com>
www.playoba.ca

National Coaching Certification Program
<http://nccp.baseball.ca>



Fair Play Code For Coaches

1. I will teach my athletes to play fairly, demonstrate good sportsmanship and to respect the rules, the equipment and ball diamonds, officials and opponents.
2. I will remember that children play to have fun and must be encouraged to have confidence in themselves. I will also remember that young athletes have other interests and obligations.
3. I will remember that children need a coach they can respect. Therefore I will be generous with praise and also set an example of good sportsmanship.
4. I will ensure that all athletes get equal instruction and support as well as fair playing time.
5. I will not ridicule or yell at any baseball player for making mistakes or for performing poorly. I will show umpires the same respect.
6. I will make sure that equipment and facilities are safe and I will encourage a litter-free environment.
7. I recognize that coaching is a commitment and I will endeavor to improve my coaching skills.

Adapted from Fair Play - It's Your Call! A Resource Manual for Coaches

Coaching Basics

Thank you for agreeing to coach a group of athletes who need a coach to enjoy everything that sport has to offer: fun, competition, friendship, and personal growth.

Thank you for taking the time from your personal schedule to devote to the development of young people who will benefit from your presence, your planning, your teaching, and your personal involvement in making sport a fun place to be.

Thank you for accepting the responsibility of helping young people become better athletes, for keeping them safe and helping them feel good about themselves and what they do.

Thank you for caring enough to seek some help in getting started. The first step is the hardest, but you'll find lots of help along the way. As you continue coaching, the 3M National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) will help you develop your skills as a coach.

If you get the impression we're glad you're here, you're right - we are!

We've created this introductory course to help you take the first steps in coaching. Here you'll find the basics of coaching, especially coaching young athletes, as well as links to more detailed information sources, programs and courses. You'll also find links to Ontario's sport organizations, who will help you obtain more information on the technical aspects of coaching your specific sport. Please feel free to print and circulate this information!

Sports Alliance of Ontario

Coaching Basics

by Lorne Adams, February 2000

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Your Role as Coach

People become coaches for many reasons: because they have a child in sport, because they were an athlete themselves, or because they want an opportunity to help in their community. Some coaches step forward; some are asked to help. No matter what the reasons, all coaches have the same roles. You will be a teacher, a leader, an organizer and sometimes will even act as a counselor.

Coach has a nice ring to it. It sounds important. It is important. Think back to some of the lessons your coaches taught you. Perhaps you remember the importance of trying your best all the time. Perhaps you remember how important team goals and sportsmanship were. Perhaps you were taught how to solve problems or you were excited about learning new things. That coach made a difference in your life. You too can make the sport experience meaningful, fun, and memorable. That's why you're here. When your reasons for coaching match the needs and development level of your athletes, everyone can win.

In your role as a teacher, you will be asked to share your knowledge of the sport and prepare athletes to play by improving fitness and developing skills specific to your sport.

In your role as leader, you will make many decisions, to motivate your athletes and help them set and attain goals.

In your role as an organizer, you will manage practice and game schedules for the team, plan and evaluate practices and evaluate athletes.

In your role as a counselor, you will listen to and provide guidance and support for your athletes.

It is important to understand that athletes, like coaches, participate for different reasons. Some enjoy the sensation of speed, power, or grace. Some athletes just want to be with their friends, or be a part of a team (social reasons). Some athletes want to win, to improve themselves or advance to high levels in their sport (achievement reasons).

Match your reasons for coaching with the reasons that athletes participate. A coach who is driven to win, coaching a team of 7 year olds who are there for fun and social reasons, can result in an unhappy coach and unhappy athletes.

Make Sport a Fun Place to Be

In sport, we need to foster the willingness to try new things, to take risks, to test potential. This is best accomplished in a supportive, encouraging atmosphere that is characterized by praise not criticism, full of rewards not punishment. Rather than saying "That's the wrong way to do it...!" try saying "You've done this part well, now let's see if we can add ...". Try to catch your athletes doing something right not something wrong.

Sport should be fun. Fun doesn't mean that athletes need to laughing and giggling all the time. Part of the fun is challenge that is realistic and encouraging. Part of fun is playing - playing the game or playing at parts of the game. Fun is not standing in line waiting for your brief turn at an activity. Fun is being actively involved. Fun is being respected for yourself and your particular talents. Fun means freedom from negative criticism and harassment. Fun means that we all count as part of the team. Fun means that we play the game fairly, not to bend the rules or break them to gain an advantage. Fun means having a sense of satisfaction that what you are involved in is gratifying and worthwhile. Fun is what your athletes should expect from you. Fun is what you should expect now that you are involved in coaching.

As a coach, you are an equal partner in making sport fun - you should neither be overly authoritarian nor merely a passive observer.

Growth and Development

While it may be stating the obvious, it helps to remember that children are not miniature adults. Kids develop in stages and have differing physical and mental capabilities at each stage.

The sport system divides athletes by age groups, but age is not the only measure of their maturity or readiness for a specific sport activity. Not all 10 year olds are alike. Some are more mature physically, mentally, and socially while others are less mature. You may have on your team two or three groups of athletes who are quite different emotionally or physically even though they are the same chronological age. You may have to create activities appropriate for the different groups on your team.

As the athlete grows, develops, and matures their approach to sport will change. In general, the following is true about the young athletes you coach:

Children under 7-8 are motivated by fun and often dislike competition.
Cooperative games are very useful

Children 8-10 begin to understand the importance of rules. They identify with personal prestige and skill levels more than winning or losing. They become more self-centred.

Children over 12 become more competitive. Winning and losing become more important.

Physical abilities change dramatically with maturity level.
The ability to translate commands into action changes dramatically with maturity.

Asking kids to do things that are beyond their developmental capacities frustrates both athletes and coaches. Contact your sport organization or the Sport Alliance of Ontario to access resources which will help you develop appropriate programs for your athletes.

Create a Strong Self-image

How athletes feel about themselves (self-image) is important. If they don't feel good about themselves in a particular setting they avoid that environment – they quit sport, or do not perform to their potential. You play a large role in the development of an athlete's self-image. It's quite easy, really: do the things that others do to you to make you feel good.

Know their names and use them (first names) when addressing them

Establish eye contact - kneel don't bend

Smile - often and readily

Give approving nods, winks, thumbs up

Develop a list of 100 ways to say "Way to go!"

Applaud effort not just results

Be enthusiastic, energetic

Involve them in decisions

Let athletes assume leadership in an appropriate situation

Spend time with everyone

Give them responsibilities

Be their biggest fan/cheerleader - remind them of their achievements

Treat them like you'd like to be treated when you are learning or being evaluated on some new task or skill.

Organize a Great Practice

World-class coaches have both annual and daily plans for their practices. They start with a script of what will be done, how it will be done, and why it is being done. Like them, you should have seasonal goals for what you want the team, the individual athletes, and yourself to accomplish.

You need a plan for your daily practices, too!

It is extremely important to have a plan when you coach beginning athletes. They don't have a lot of experience or skill to draw on and if this is your first time coaching, neither do you. If you know what you want to do, when you want to do it, how you want it done, and why you want it done, you will be much more confident and assured- and so will your athletes.

Plan the Practice

To begin, break your practice down into five to ten minute segments following this order:

Introduction:

- explain briefly what will happen today, what they will learn.

Warm-Up -

- get athletes moving, get them ready for activity
- raise body temperature through vigorous activity
- start slowly then increase pace
- dynamic stretches
- basic warm-up for your sport

Review previously learned skills -

- utilize drills that give them an opportunity to practice fundamental skills or skills that they learned recently

Learn new skills -

- describe the new skill
- pick 2-3 teaching points to emphasize
- provide drills that utilize the new skill
- make sure everyone gets to participate (learn) - avoid long lines of standing around
- provide feedback - and encouragement
- Change or modify skills as athletes improve

Game-like Activities and/or Conditioning –

- simplified game situation – reduce area of play, number of players, rules
- incorporate fitness activities if appropriate

Cool down –

- decrease level (intensity) of activity gradually
- static stretches for the muscles most used in the activity

Wrap up –

- review practice and plan with athletes
- prepare them for next practice
- do your own personal evaluation – what could be better next time?

Don't Just Practice – Practice Effectively!

An effective practice session has the following characteristics

High Activity Level:

- Every athlete participates frequently. There is little standing in line, no waiting for equipment, minimal time listening to instruction.

Drills and activities change frequently, athletes do something new every 5-10 minutes
Drills have progression – easy to hard, simple to complex

High Variety Level:

Skills are practiced in different ways
Fun activities are provided
Novelty is introduced – play new position, change rules, use different equipment
Work with different people, individually, pairs, small groups

High Organization Level:

Written practice plan
Environment is organized – enough equipment in the right place before practice starts
Start, stay, and finish on time

This may seem like a lot of work, but once you've tried it once or twice, it is quite simple and both you and your athletes will benefit.

PLAN FOR GAME DAY

You should also have a plan for game days or competitions:

Warm up -

prepare them for game activity as you would for practice

Establish what we want to do today –

play fair
good sportsmanship
do our best
tactics and skill reminders: good passing, good defense, etc.

Post-competition wrap up -

Highlight the positive things that happened
Praise effort - be positive
Ready them for next practice
Evaluate the game
- make note of performance and accomplishments
- make note of things to be addressed at next practice. Highlight the positive things that happened

Good Coaching Needs Good Communication

Communication is not merely giving instructions and having athletes carry them out. Effective communication is a two way street. You are both the sender and receiver of information. That means that not only do you need to be understood when you communicate, but you also need to listen to the people you communicate with. Listening skills are as important as speaking skills. Here are some helpful hints.

When speaking:

- Use words the athlete understands (remember growth and development needs)
- Don't speak too quickly
- Make sure that they are paying attention to you
- Get down to their eye level
- Make sure everyone can hear (speak loudly enough, face them when speaking)
- Make sure they understand (ask them to state what you've asked them to do)
- Repeat yourself if necessary

When listening:

- Establish eye contact
- Give signs that you are paying attention (uh huh, yes, I see)
- Have the rest of the group quiet
- Restate or rephrase what you've heard (you want to know what to when...)
- Be positive
- Thank them for asking the question or making a point

When you give feedback:

- Be prompt- give feedback while the athlete still remembers what they did
- Be positive- start by mentioning what they're doing well
- Be specific- explain exactly how to make the improvement
- Be sensible- don't ask for changes the athlete is not capable of
- Make sure the athlete understands- ask them to repeat or demonstrate

"That was good! You've got the arm action. Now let's work on the step - you need to point your toe like this. OK? Ready to try it again?"

Help Your Athletes Get Fit

Even people who are new to coaching recognize the need for athletes to be fit in order to play the game. In fact, it may be one of the first things you try to do. However, getting athletes fit isn't just a matter of making them work until they drop from fatigue. Fitness development needs to be age (developmentally) appropriate, progressive and should not predispose the athlete to injury.

Here is a list of some basic do's and don'ts for getting your athletes fit.

- Do - Progress gradually over the season. Start with lower intensity, lower duration activities and work up over time.
- Build endurance first before introducing higher intensity activities (run continuously before sprinting).
- Put the fitness part of practice near the end after they have tried to learn new skills. It's more difficult to learn skills when fatigued.
- Always include a warm-up (see above).
- Monitor athletes and reduce or stop activity as they become fatigued.
- Provide plenty of cool water--particularly if the activity is intense or if it is hot and humid.
- Scale back intensity in hot, humid weather.
- Always have a 'cool-down' period at the end of practice (see the earlier section).

Don't - Ask athletes to perform extreme stretches, hyperextensions or rotations, e.g., neck bridges, hurdle stretch.
Ask developing athletes to do strengthening activities that require them to lift or support more than their body weight.
Ask developing athletes to perform high intensity activities such as repeated wind sprints.
Don't deny your athletes water and rest breaks.
If you see your athletes only once or twice a week, don't sacrifice skill development for fitness training. You may be better off teaching technique and fundamentals of the game.

How to Make Sport Safer

Every coach wants to minimize the risk of injury to athletes. We can't totally eliminate the risk of injury but we can reduce it drastically. Many risks are under your control- and you have a responsibility to take the necessary steps to protect your athletes. Once again, it helps to have a plan.

- If your athletes use equipment (sticks, bats, etc.) be sure to teach them how to handle the equipment safely.
- Always survey your practice/game facility. Hazards are often simply overlooked until an accident happens.
- Make sure they have proper, well-fitting athletic wear (shoes, helmets, shoulder pads, skates, etc.)
- Remove obstacles or hazards. Move benches back a safe distance from the playing area.
- Pad objects that athletes may run into (end walls of gym, basketball standards, volleyball support wires).
- Provide plenty of water (particularly in warm weather)
- Have a first aid kit on hand
- Have a medical information form for each your athletes' past injuries, allergies, conditions, that may affect their ability to participate.
- Know your athletes' fitness, illnesses, etc.
- Be cautious returning athletes to activity when they have been injured or ill.

For You

It is beyond the scope of this project to teach you how to deal with injuries if they should occur. However, there are lots of places to go for help that will prepare you to deal with most of the sports injuries you will encounter. Red Cross, St. John's Ambulance, SIPAC (Sports Injury Prevention and Care), and the 3M NCCP Level I Theory manual are good sources of information and training.

What to do When Things Go Wrong

When things go wrong and there is a major injury, you must have an EAP (Emergency Action Plan). Take time to create one before your next practice. The plan includes the following:

- Location of the nearest phone
- Phone numbers of ambulance, hospital, etc.
- Clear directions for emergency care people to get to where you are
- Having a "call" person (the person who makes a call) to get help
- Having a "charge" person (the person in charge) to stay with the athlete and be in charge at the scene.

Your Role With Parents

As a coach, you'll often have to work with the parents of your athletes. The chances are that you are a parent yourself. If that is the case, ask yourself what kinds of things you would expect of a coach when they are dealing with your son or daughter. What would you like to know about their experience as a coach? What would you like to know about the interaction between your child and the coach? You probably had those kinds of questions as a parent, however, now that you are the coach, other parents are looking to you for answers. It helps to remember that "informed people are cooperative people."

How do people become informed? In the most simple and direct way. You talk to them, one on one or as a parent group. Tell them how you are going to conduct yourself, what expectations you have of the athletes and how you will treat them. Tell them what your expectations are of them as parents.

Another way to inform parents is to write them a letter, addressing the concerns that any parent would have. Tell them a little about your philosophy, your expectations, and create an avenue of communication. Good coach-parent relationships create a positive environment for the athlete, and everyone benefits.

In Closing

Thank you once again for taking the time to review Coaching Basics. As you can see from the materials and references we have provided you with, there is a lot to learn. However, now that you have started, the most important thing is to use what you have learned to enjoy your athletes, your sport, the competition, and to have fun.

The real rewards for your efforts are not in the awarding of trophies or medals but in the words of an athlete who, at the end of the season, extends to you a heartfelt "Thanks Coach!"

Enjoy your season, your athletes, and everything coaching has to offer!

Coach / Umpire Relations

Most calls made in a game are judgement calls. You may see it one way and the umpire another.

Missed calls do occur. The team needs to be able to put those behind them and carry on without losing focus on the game itself.

Keeping calm in dealing with calls is part of teaching the team good sportsmanship.

Yelling at an umpire that he made the wrong call when it is a judgement call will not result in a change and does nothing for your relationship with the umpire.

When a call is made that is incorrect according to the rules of the game then you may ask to discuss it with the umpire. It may still be his judgement as to whether a particular rule applies.

If it is clearly a wrong call according to the rules, ask for time and politely discuss it with the umpire.

If he agrees with you then the call will be overturned.

Coaches should never charge onto the field, yelling at the umpire.

Respect for the umpire's role is an important part of respect for the game itself.

Know the rules for your age group and the rules of the game.

Pre-Game, Pre-Practice Warm-up and Stretching

Before any athlete performs at any performance level they should be physically prepared to do so. Even at the young age, injuries can occur if the body is not properly prepared to perform. Some will argue that younger bodies are already flexible and ready to go, this is not the case. Anytime a body performs a movement that requires a different or erratic movement to what it is used to it should be prepared to do so through proper warm-up and stretching.

Not only does it promote good health, but it provides longevity in the sports were our athletes perform, and in the case of our younger athletes, flexibility is strength. All practices and games should be started with a proper warm-up and stretch.

There are basically two types of stretches – dynamic and static. Studies in body mechanics over the last few years have proven that dynamic stretches that prepare the body for motion should be done before an activity while static stretches which promote flexibility should be done after an activity. Most adults that played baseball in their youth will only be familiar with static stretches. The belief now is that doing these before a game causes the muscles to slow down in their reaction to the need to move. So – time to change!!

In the following pages Dynamic stretching information from a document on the James Madison University web site entitled Dynamic Flexibility and Mobility is reproduced. There are many more options on the internet that will help you understand the dynamics behind stretching.

After that we have included material on static stretches. Again it is our recommendation that these be done after a game or practice to return the muscles to a relaxed stated and promote flexibility.

AND – before you start – send you players for a slow run to get the body warmed and ready for movement.

Dynamic Stretches

The following material is from James Madison University's Strength and Conditioning Program.

This is the standard dynamic flexibility series used at JMU. Your workout should have a prescribed warmup, but if it doesn't a three minute total body warm-up, (i.e., jogging, rope jumping, total body movement) should always precede this dynamic series. The warm-up raises the body temperature, increases blood flow to the muscles, and lubricates the joints. Always remember warm-up to stretch, do not stretch to warm-up.

Dynamic movements are the best way to prepare your body for dynamic workouts. Contrary to old beliefs, the best time to work on static flexibility is at the end of your workout, and not in the beginning. After every workout you should follow a **4-6 minute total body static stretching series**.

The following series of Dynamic movements will develop your flexibility, balance, coordination, mobility and strength.

WALKING HIGH KNEES

Purpose: To flex the hips and shoulders, and stretch the glutes, quads, lower back and shoulders.

Procedure:

1. Take an exaggerated high step, driving your knee as high as possible, and simultaneously push up on the toes of your opposite foot.
2. Use the proper arm swing; 90° angle at the elbows, hands swing up to chin level and back beyond rear pocket.



elbows, hands swing up to chin level and back beyond rear pocket.

Key Points:

1. Drive your knees up as high as possible.

Variation: 1. High knees pull: Same as above, but grab your knee and pull it up and in with each stride.

WALKING LUNGE

Purpose: To stretch the glutes, hamstrings, hip flexors and calves.

Procedure:

1. Step out with a long stride, striking the heel of your forward foot and extending onto the toes of your back foot.
2. Complete the cycle by bringing your trail leg through and standing upright.



Key Points:

1. Position your hands behind your head while keeping your eyes focused forward.
2. Flex your front knee to 90° and keep your back

knee from striking the ground.

WALKING HIGH KNEE LUNGE

Purpose: To stretch the glutes, hamstrings, hip flexors and calves.

Procedure:

1. Drive your forward knee up as high as possible and then step out with a long stride striking the heel of your forward foot and extending onto the toes of your back foot.
2. Complete the cycle by bringing your trail leg through and standing upright.

Key Points:

1. This drill is performed identical to the walking lunge, with the exception of the high knee action.
2. Position your hands behind your head with your eyes focused forward.
3. Flex your front knee to 90° and keep your back knee from striking the ground.

WALKING STRAIGHT LEG KICKS

Purpose: To stretch the hamstrings, calves and lower back.

Procedure:

1. Walk forward keeping your front leg straight.
2. Kick your leg up and touch your toes to the



- fingers of your opposite hand.
3. Repeat the cycle with your opposite leg.

Key Points:

1. Keep your arm extended out parallel with the ground.
2. On your first set of this drill only kick to 75% capacity, and

then on your second set kick to full capacity.

WALKING SIDE LUNGE, OVER & BACK

Purpose: To stretch the groin, glutes, hamstrings, and ankles.

Procedure:

1. Keep your torso upright and take a long stride out to the side.
2. Lunge out bending your forward knee to 90° while keeping your trail leg straight.



3. Lower your hips and shift your body weight to the opposite leg.
4. Recover by bringing your feet together and standing upright.

Key Points:

1. Repeat the drill for 10 yards.
2. Keep your head focused forward with your arms hanging down in front of your body.

RUNNING BUTT KICKS (20 reps)

Purpose: To stretch the quadriceps and hip flexors.

Procedure:

1. Begin running by flexing your knee and bringing your heel back and around to your buttocks.



2. Maintain a slight forward lean throughout the drill, and stay on the balls of your feet.
3. Complete 20 kicks within 10 yards.

Key Points:

1. Maintain a quick, yet shallow arm swing, keep your elbows at 90° and drive your hands from chest to front hip pocket.

RUNNING HIGH KNEES (20 reps)

Purpose: To stretch the glutes, quads, low back and shoulders.

Procedure:

1. Execute proper running form; keep your elbows at 90° and drive your hands up to chin level and back to your rear pocket.



2. Stay on the balls of your feet, and drive your knees up as high as possible, and then down as quickly as possible.

RUNNING CARIOCA

Purpose: To stretch the abductors, adductors, glutes, ankles and hips.

Procedure:

1. Stay on the balls of your feet with your hips in a low semi-squat position.



2. Begin the drill by twisting your hips and crossing one leg in front of the other, bring your trail leg through, and cross your lead leg behind the trail leg.

3. Your shoulders remain square

through the entire drill.

BACK PEDAL

Purpose: To stretch the hip flexors, quads and calves.

Procedure:

1. Keeping your hips and knees bent with shoulders positioned over the balls of your feet.
2. For the first 10 yards utilize short choppy steps.
3. For the second 10 yards open up your stride and kick back.

LYING SCORPION

Purpose: To stretch the hip flexors, abdominals, quads and shoulders.

Procedure:

1. Lie down in a prone position.



2. While keeping your chest in contact with the ground, cross one

leg behind the other to the opposite side of your body.

3. This drill should be done in a continuous manner.

ARM SWINGS, FORWARD AND BACK

Purpose: To stretch the chest, shoulders and upper back.

Procedure:

1. Swing your arms forward, so they cross, and swing them back as far as possible.
2. This drill should be done in a controlled continuous fashion for 10 repetitions.



SIDE BEND, OVER AND BACK

Purpose: To stretch the triceps, upper back, abdominals, and obliques.

Procedure:

1. Bend to one side while holding your opposite arm overhead, quickly reverse direction and stretch the other side.
2. This drill should be done in a controlled continuous fashion for 10 stretches on each side of your body.



POWER SKIP

Purpose: To further prepare your body for full speed action.

Procedure:

1. The power skip is executed by doing an explosive, exaggerated skip while emphasizing height rather than distance. Emphasize a big arm swing and explosive knee lift.



Photos of Karla Gessler (JMU Volleyball) taken by Skylar Saar

Static Stretching Definition and Facts

Static stretches are used to stretch and lengthen the muscle to an elongated position while the body is at rest. These stretches are usually held to the point of discomfort for at least 30-60 seconds.

It's important to understand that these stretches should **never** be used as warmup. There is overwhelming evidence that static stretching prior to exercise will decrease explosiveness, and could even increase the possibility of injury.

According to Mick Critchell, who wrote Warm Ups for Soccer a Dynamic Approach, said

“Static stretching has been shown to decrease muscle strength by up to 9% for 60 minutes following the stretch and decrease eccentric strength by 7% followed by a specific hamstring stretch.” (Page 5)

The Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport vol. 71, no.1 also found that,

“Three 15-second stretches of the hamstrings, quadriceps, and calf muscles reduced the peak vertical velocity of a vertical jump in the majority of subjects.” (A-30)

Lastly, from Guidelines to the Implementation of a Dynamic Stretching Routine,

“Static based stretching programs seem best suited following an activity.” (pp. 53-55)

There are hundreds of studies that conclude with these same results regarding static stretching. It is advisable for baseball pitchers to use dynamic stretching and [foam rollers](#) instead of static stretches prior to your physical activity.

Once you have finished your strength training routine or baseball game, you can implement static stretching exercises. Here are some of the benefits of static stretching following activity:

- Improves mobility and range of motion
- Allows muscles to relax and lengthen
- Faster recovery time
- Increased flexibility

Now that you understand the potential benefits of utilizing static stretching following any physical activity, let's take a look at some exercises.

Static Stretching Exercises

Here are some very basic exercises for both the upper and lower body. It is best to hold these static stretches for 20-30 seconds, but holding them up to 60 seconds can greatly improve flexibility and range of motion. Spending an extra 15 minutes static stretching can be very beneficial for all people who exercise.

Standing Hamstrings

Stand with both leg together, slowly bend towards your toes towards the point of mild discomfort, and hold this position for 20-30 seconds. Do not bounce!

Standing Quads

If you have good balance, stand on one foot

and pull opposite the foot towards your butt. You should feel a stretch in your quad and hip flexor. Repeat on opposite side.

Side Trunk Stretch

Pull one arm behind your head by grasping the tricep. Once your arm is behind your head, you will then bend your body to one side. You will feel a stretch in your tricep and lat. Repeat on the opposite side.

Knees to chest

While on the ground, pull both of your knees to your chest without lifting up your lower back.

One knee to chest

Same as the previous exercise except you will only hold one knee at a time.

Male Dominance

While laying on your stomach, press your body upward so that your chest is in the air, and your head is looking up. This is an excellent exercise for stretching the lower abdominals.

Lat Stretch

While on your knees, push your body back with your hands on the ground. Your arms

will stretched out in front of you, and you should feel a stretch in your lats.

Hip Stretch

While laying on your back, bend on knee in the air. Place your opposite foot on your quad. Pull the front of your bent knee towards you. You should feel a stretch in your lower back and hip.

Internal Rotation Stretch

Lay on your side with your arm closest to the ground bent at a 90 degree angle. You should have your head rested on something like a foam roller. With your opposite hand, press your hand towards the ground. If your hand is able to touch the ground, then you aren't doing it correctly. This is an excellent static stretch for baseball pitchers.

Read more:

<http://www.theulimatepitcher.com/static-stretching-for-baseball-pitchers/#ixzz2Lxg2HTwS>

Throwing and Receiving Basics

Throwing Grip

Young players should be shown and taught to grip the ball properly in the 'C' grip, two fingers across the seams (forefinger and middle finger) on top of the ball, close but not together with the thumb underneath the ball. If the player's hand is too small then three fingers should be used across the seams. The other fingers are bent slightly to the side and relaxed. Slight space between the palm and the ball.

Arm and Body Action in Throwing

Young players tend to face the person they are throwing to. They should turn so that their shoulders are lined up with their target. Telling them that they need to have four eyes on the target can help; two eyes in the head, one on the shoulder and one on the hip. The ball should be taken out of the glove in a full arm rotation back and away from the target with the palm of the hand back and down ('show the ball to the outfielders'). The front foot steps towards the target but remains closed, the hips turn, and the arm comes forward. The ball is released slightly above and in front of the head.

The follow-through is important so as not to harm the shoulder.





Receiving Throws

The location of the ball determines the position of the glove. Fingers up when the ball is above the waist, fingers down when it is below the waist, and fingers parallel to the ground at belt height.

The arms should be relaxed and extended toward the ball. Catch the ball on the throwing side of the body and draw the hands back to absorb the force of the throw. The throwing hand should be close to the glove ('two hands') and enters the glove immediately after the catch to come up with the correct grip (see throwing grip).



Basic Drills

Grip Drill – Players flip ball into the air to themselves, catch it with the throwing hand and practice finding the correct grip before simulated throw.

Target Drill – pick a target on throwing partner (e.g. chest) award one point for each ball thrown accurately to the target.

Crow-hop Drill – Each player has a ball and tosses it up in the air, catches it, does a crow-hop and simulates a throw.

Shuffle Step Drill – Players line-up facing the coach without a ball. Coach asks the group to shuffle left and then right. After several repetitions, players should simulate receiving a ground ball using two hands.

Hitting Basics

Players should choose a bat that is not too heavy.



The bat should be held in the fingers not back in the palms.



The middle (knocking knuckles) should be in close alignment.

Young players tend to grip the bat too tight prior to the swing, get them to relax.

Keep the toes parallel and the same distance from the plate.

The batters head should be turned so that both eyes can see the pitcher and the head should not be tilted.

The batter should not stand too far back from the plate.

The Ready Position

The batter should be in a balanced position with feet shoulder width or slightly wider apart.

Shoulders and hips are level, head turned to the pitcher with the chin over the front shoulder.

The bat should be held halfway between vertical and horizontal with the hands at collar-bone height.

The elbows and forearms create an inverted 'V'; the back elbow is NOT up parallel to the ground.

Knees are slightly bent and relaxed as is the whole body.



Stride and Load

To initiate the swing, the batter takes a small (6-8") slide step forward with his front foot while moving his hands back the same distance; the weight is now shifted back. The front foot should land closed (not pointing at the pitcher). Head remains steady. Make sure the batter does not straighten his arms as he takes his hands back.

The back knee turns in causing the rear heel to rotate upward, the hips start to turn toward the pitcher, while the hands initially hold their position and then start their drive towards the

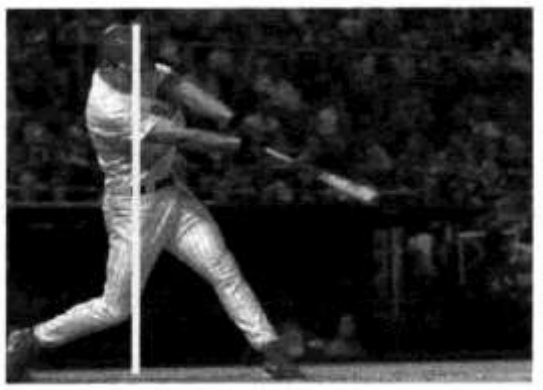
baseball. Weight is transferred forward towards the front leg. Make sure the batters understand that they do not move over top of the front leg.



The butt of the bat should be driven towards the baseball, the back elbow remaining tucked close to the body in a power position.

At contact the batter should drive through the ball and not stop the bat on contact.

The head, which was over the front shoulder at the start, should be over the back shoulder at the end with the head still down looking at the point of contact and the bat finishing high. The upper body and the head are centered between the feet and knees at contact.



Think 'Short to it – Long through it'.

Basic Drills

Hip Rotation – Have the players place the bat across their back and under their elbows. Practice the rapid rotation initiated by the knee turn.

Stride Drill – Players practice the short forward stride keeping their hands back and the hips not rotated.

Swing Simulation – Players practice the complete proper hitting motion without a ball having been thrown.

Tee – Drill – use a tee to work on the complete proper hitting mechanics. Balls can be hit into a screen or use players to field the balls.

Soft Toss Drill – the coach kneels about 10" from the batter on a 45 degree angle (or more depending on the talent of the batter). Balls are tossed into the strike zone with the batter working on mechanics and eye-hand coordination. Balls can again be hit into a screen or use other players to field.

Hitting Intermediate

This section will deal with hitting faults and what can be done about them.

Over-striding – The batter is too anxious and strides too far resulting in most of his weight being over his front foot and therefore he cannot get a good hip rotation. He should widen his stance and concentrate on a shorter stride.

Lunging – The batter can't wait for the ball. Often he collapses too far on the front leg causing his eye level to drop. They have great difficulty with anything off-speed and usually have low power. A total review of the steps to hitting is needed.

Upper-cutting – The batter hits everything up in the air or misses the ball completely as he cannot get on the same plane as the ball is travelling. Make sure the grip and position of the bat in the hands is correct and the batter keeps his shoulders level during the swing. The batter should practice hitting ground balls during batting practice.

Hitching – The batter moves his hands and arms as the pitcher releases the ball. This affects the timing and can lead to a late uppercut swing. The batter should concentrate on the 'straight to it' approach. If he starts with hands too high, move them down to a more comfortable position.

Stepping-in-the-Bucket – The batter steps away from the plate with the stride foot. He will never hit outside pitches well. Normally this is associated with a fear of being hit. The batter should stride to the pitcher. Work on this during batting practice, but also teach the batter how to avoid being hit by tossing tennis

balls at him while he works on turning away from the pitch.

Excessive Crouching – the batter bends his knees and hips too much, his weight is too far back from the plate resulting in poor balance and an awkward swing. Change the stance to be more upright and more relaxed.

Head Turning – This results from over-swinging. The front shoulder pulls away from the pitch and the head and eyes follow the shoulder. He loses sight of the ball as it enters the hitting zone. Work on keeping the front shoulder in and have the batter keep his eyes on the point of contact even after the ball has been hit. 'Eyes Down' can be the verbal instruction.

Casting – The batter tends to straighten out his front arm prior to the swing resulting in the bat being too far from the body at contact. He will have trouble with inside pitches. The batter should concentrate on keeping his hands inside the pitch and his elbows bent at contact.

Foot Movement – Movement of the back foot while waiting for the pitch to arrive will put the batter off balance. They should maintain the original position for the back foot. Review the mechanics of the swing with the batter.

Swinging Late – This could be due to slow reflexes, a bad hitch, lack of strength, or poor eye sight. Opening the stance a little might help some of those issues.

Infield Basics

Resting Position – Prior to the pitch being made, the infielders can be in a resting position; often seen as bent over with hands on knees however a vertical stance is often used and preferred by some coaches.

Ready Position – As the pitcher goes into his motion the infielder should move to an athletic position having his hands in front of the body, bent forward, feet wider than shoulder width apart. The infielder should put his/her body in motion by either taking a few steps forward as the pitcher releases the ball or shifting the weight from foot to foot. This will allow for quicker reaction to balls that are hit.

Fielding Position – Recognizing that the ball isn't going to be hit to the most comfortable spot to field it, the following is the ideal fielding position. Having moved quickly in the direction of the ball (forward on short hits, laterally if needed), the infielder should position the body square to the ball, feet wider than shoulder width apart, the left leg (for a right hand thrower) further forward than the right leg, butt down at knee height, back straight, head up, and hands out in front. The throwing hand follows the ball into the glove.



Fielding to the Left or Right – To move laterally, the body stays low, leans in the direction of the ball, and the first step is a cross-over step. The player then moves to a position to intercept the ball and then assumes the proper fielding position as above.

Ready to Throw – Once the ball is in the glove, the glove is brought up into the middle of the body, the throwing hand finds the proper grip on the ball and the infielder is ready to throw.

First step (for a right hand thrower) will be with the right foot, shoulders perpendicular to the target as in the Receiving and Throwing Basics, and then the second step is the left foot going towards the target. The eyes remain on the target throughout the throw.

Basic Infielding Drills

Simulation Drill (no ball) - players lined up facing the coach. Coach asks the players to assume the various positions (resting, ready, fielding).

Cross-over and Field Drill (no ball) – After assuming the fielding position, the players are directed to cross-over in one direction, take three steps, glide into fielding position. To move back to the starting spot, the cross-over in the opposite direction is used.

Cross-over, Field and Throw Drill (no ball) – as above but player simulate proper throwing motion in the direction of 1st base.

Group Ground Ball Drill (with balls) – divide the team into three groups with a coach/parent for each. Balls are rolled directly at them and then left or right. Player must go through the various

positions, field the ball and throw back to the coach/parent.

Group pop-up drill – balls are tossed up in the air for the infielders to work on their infield catches (two hands).

Outfield Basics

Stance – Prior to the pitcher making his pitch, the outfielders stand erect in the outfield with feet shoulder width apart. As the pitcher goes into his motion, the fielder should lower into a slight crouch assuming an athletic position. Similar to the infielders, the outfielder should put his body in motion by either shifting weight from side to side or taking a few quick steps.

Catching Fly Balls – Catch the ball with two hands at eye level and on the throwing side of



the body. If lateral movement is required it is started with a cross-over step.

When running to a spot to receive a fly ball, the outfielders should run on the balls of their feet (not the heels) so as to keep the eyes steady.

Remember that on fly balls the safest first action is to go back using a drop step. That is done by stepping back (drop step) with the foot that is on the side of the fly ball, then using a cross-over step to complete the turn in that direction, keeping the head and eyes on the ball as the player goes back.



Outfielders should avoid the ‘back-pedal’ at all costs; the player can trip or more often cannot get far enough back to make the catch.

Receiving Ground Balls – Action is similar to the steps in the Infielding section. Charge forward on ground balls, glide to the fielding position, and receive the ball with two hands. With no one on base, the outfielder can drop to one knee to receive the ground ball. Older players will need to learn that in certain situations (e.g. runners moving to score), time is critical so the ground ball can then be taken with one hand on the outside of the foot on the non-throwing side of the body.



Throwing the Ball – Outfielders should always throw with the proper grip and using the complete overhand throw. Rather than throw high to get the ball to their target, if they are not strong enough to make the throw, they should learn to throw so that the ball arrives on one bounce; this is faster than throwing in a high arc. Outfielders should learn to ‘hit the cut-off’ rather than trying to throw all the way to a base.

Crow-hop – To get more velocity on the throw, the outfielder can use a ‘crow-hop’. Cross over the back foot in front of the front foot with knee bent, hop forward using the back foot, lead with the front foot and throw.



Run – Outfielders must be taught to move on every play either to back up another outfielder or to come in and back up an infield position.

Basic Drills

All of the Infield Basic drills can also be used for outfielders (working on stance, fielding ground balls and fielding pop-ups).

Sponge balls are often best for beginner’s taking fly balls. Throwing the balls up in the air is usually more successful and consistent than having an inexperienced coach try to hit fly balls with a fungo bat.

Outfielders can participate in the ‘infield routing’ by catching ground balls and/or fly balls and throwing them to each of the bases.

Catching Basics

The catcher is a key position on any baseball team; unfortunately at the youngest age, when plays at home are rare and passed balls don't matter, coaches often use weaker players at this position; as a result it is often difficult to find a good catcher at the middle ages in youth baseball.

There are two key stances for a catcher; signal position and receiving stance. Since this manual is for younger ages in which the pitcher should be concentrating on throwing pitches in the strike zone, only the receiving stance is discussed.

Receiving Stance – Catcher should centre behind the plate, feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart. The throwing side foot will be 4-6 inches behind the glove side foot. Weight is evenly distributed over the foot and the heels are NOT off the ground. Arms are relaxed and the glove is out in front. The elbows should be clear of and not inside the knees. The catcher should position himself so that he can reach out and almost touch the back leg of the batter.



The glove is held so that the index finger is pointing at noon or 1 o'clock on an imaginary clock face. The fingers of the throwing hand are held in a relaxed fist either behind the glove (runners on base) or behind the leg. It is important that the hand not be put behind the back as that exposes the hard part of the elbow to foul balls as opposed to the soft part if the hand is behind the leg.

Receiving the Pitch – Catcher needs relaxed hands. Provide a target low in the strike zone. Catch the ball out in front. Do not try to pull 'balls' into the strike zone as the umpire may not give you a strike call on a border line pitch. Stay low to allow the umpire to see the pitch. Don't stand up on low pitches, then try to reach down, the equipment will protect the catcher.

Throwing - The catcher needs good balance and a good grip to throw. Proper technique is a two-step, (for a right hander this would be right then left). Younger players lacking strength may need to do a three step (for a right hander this would be left, right, left). The upper body mechanics remain unchanged from the normal throwing action for players. The throw is properly made by cocking the ball behind the ear but again younger players may need to reach further back to get the power required.



Basic Drills

Blinking Drill – Catcher wears a mask and kneels in front of coach who softly tosses balls into the mask (tennis balls are ideal). Catcher tries not to blink. Purpose is to eliminate blinking or flinching when batter takes his swing.

Squat Drill- Two catchers facing each other in a squat position with legs crossed about 20 feet apart. Ball is thrown back and forth. Teaches catchers to receive the ball properly and to keep their elbow up and shorten the motion of the throw.

Throwing Drill – Catcher behind plate, coach tosses him a ball and the catcher works on receiving it and throwing to second base. Work on receiving, foot work and throws. 10 repetitions.

Catching Intermediate

Three topics will be covered here: Blocking Low Pitches, Tagging Runners, and Backing up the Bases

Blocking Low Pitches

Most young catchers, when they see the pitch is low, have a tendency to either start to stand up or to try to catch the ball. What usually happens next is a passed ball. Catchers should learn how to block pitches that are thrown low. The following five steps can be taught individual but in sequence, and then put together as a rapid reaction to the low pitch.

1. From the standard receiving position, drop to your knees in front of the where the ball is going.
2. Put your glove down into the 'five-hole' with your catching hand and wrist behind it.
3. Lean forward so that a ball bouncing off the chest protector is deflected back down to the ground.
4. Round your shoulders.
5. Exhale.

Catchers can go through this sequence until they have the routine down. Coaches can then throw balls in the dirt to have them blocked by the catcher. To complete the game action, the catcher should then spring to his feet and retrieve the ball, jumping into a throwing position as if base runners were trying to advance. A good catcher will always make the effort to block the low pitch regardless of whether or not there are runners on base.

Tagging Runners

The catcher should straddle the front part of the plate leaving only the back corner for the

runner. Weight is evenly distributed, legs slightly bent with the left leg pointing at the runner. This last point is key to making sure no damage is done to the knee if the runner slides into the left leg.

If possible make the tag with the ball in the bare hand protected by the glove hand.

Catch the ball first! Once you have the ball you can go down and block the approach to the plate. Remember that the catcher cannot block the plate if he doesn't have the ball.

Backing up the Bases

With no one on base, the catcher should back up first base on all ground balls hit to the infield. He does this by running far enough into foul territory to play overthrows to first. On fly balls to the right field he follows the runner to 1st in case he takes too wide a turn and the throw to the first baseman is off-line. With a runners on 1st and a bunt play being fielded by the 3rd baseman, the catcher covers 3rd base.

Coaches can practice the catcher by running a variety of plays with the infield involving the catcher and/or during normal infield practice

Pitching Basics

The following is written for a right-hand pitcher in the 'full windup delivery' . Reverse the foot instructions for a left-hander.

Stance – upright and relaxed, right foot is on top of and to the right-side of the rubber, left foot slightly behind for balance. Wait for the catcher to set the target and concentrate on that target through the entire pitching motion.

Start – pitcher takes a small step back with his left foot in order to take the weight off the right leg. Stay erect, do not tilt back. Some pitchers like to raise their glove above the head at this point however, less is better, so leave the glove at chest height.

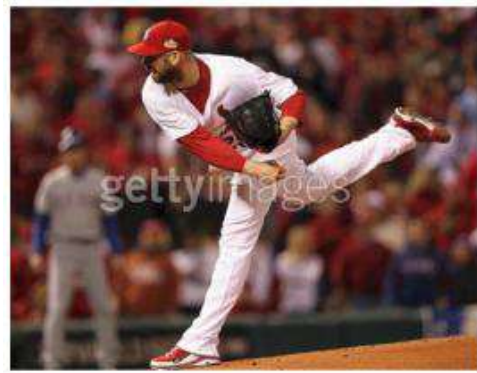
Pivot – Right foot moves to a position parallel and against the front of the rubber.

Balance – The left knee is raised towards 3rd base. Weight is over right leg. Left hip and shoulder point towards the plate. Head is up and eyes are still focused on target. Just before starting the stride, the pitching arm breaks from the glove, reaches down and back. At full extension (when the stride is complete) the throwing hand should be palm facing the outfield. The glove arm extended towards home plate with the fingers pointing down ('T' position).



Stride – The left leg should drop back towards the ground and then glide towards home before touching the mound. Do not swing the lifted leg towards home. At the same time the arm is reaching its full extension. The stride leg should land on the ball of the foot; toes not quite pointing at home plate. Left knee is bent to absorb impact but firm enough so as to prevent collapsing of the leg. The stride foot should land on or just to the left side of a line from the centre of the rubber to home plate. This will prevent 'throwing across the body'.

Hip Rotation – Upon landing the stride foot, the hips rotate quickly bringing the throwing arm around and allowing the pitcher to deliver the ball using all of his core muscles. The backside leg will be pulled off the rubber by this action.



Follow-through – The pitcher should stay in line with the direction to the plate and be prepared to field any balls hit in his direction. He should be square to the plate with his legs apart in an athletic position.

Grip – For the younger pitchers the goal is to have consistent pitches in the strike zone. The 'C' (four seam) grip should be used. Grip the ball out towards the end of the fingers and across the seams, thumb underneath.



Arm Action – make sure the pitcher is reaching back for full extension and ‘showing the ball to the outfielders’. The elbow should remain above the shoulder in the delivery. The hand comes by the head, above the ear and with palm



up, trailing the elbow and wrist. In the follow-through the arm comes across the body and finishes up outside the left knee. The chest

moves to the glove so that the glove is close to the body and ready to receive the ball. If the pitcher lets the glove arm drop to his side as part of the motion he will be off target.

Set Position – for those pitchers who are not comfortable or have difficulty pitching from the full-wind up, have them start in the set position. In this most of the actions are the same however the pitcher starts with his right foot parallel and touching the front of the rubber and his left foot further forward on the mound. He then starts with the leg lift and then follows the above sequences.

Basic Pitching Drills

Balance Position Drill - Assume and hold the balance position for several seconds. Next have the players, lift their leg into the balance position and then, without touching it to the ground, lift and drop it several times. Ensure they stay erect throughout and can maintain their balance.

Follow-through Drill – place a ball bucket on its side on the throwing side of the rubber. As the pitcher goes through his motion, his back leg must rise and clear over the bucket landing in front in a proper fielding position. This will improve both the fielding position, and teach the proper hip rotation.

Pitching Intermediate

Pitchers must be able to replicate their motion in order to be successful. Changing the way they pitch between pitches will not normally provide a good result. Coaches can help the pitcher by observing what he is doing and suggesting corrections. The pitcher should be instructed to have a smooth delivery to the plate. A jerky, quick motion will not be successful in the long run.

Control problems are often the result of five key points. –

Lack of Concentration – Pick up the target early, concentrate on hitting the target, focus on the catcher’s glove and not just the general area of home plate.

Throwing across the body – Draw a line down the mound from the location of the balance foot in the direction of home plate. The stride foot should end up beside that line on the same side as the glove. Stepping across that line requires the pitcher to throw across his body in order to hit the target. That produces strain on the arm, a poor fielding position, and trouble hitting the target consistently.

Poor Follow-through – Make sure the pitcher is extending his throwing arm in the direction of the plate and then following-through with his arm down and hand past the knee. Not extending toward the target reduces speed and lowers accuracy. Not following-through properly puts additional strain on the arm and does not allow the pitcher to be ready to field the ball.

Aiming the Ball – Concentrate, reach back, and throw hard (but no not overthrow). Having difficulty hitting the target and then trying to fix

that by not going through the proper mechanics will lead to poor results.

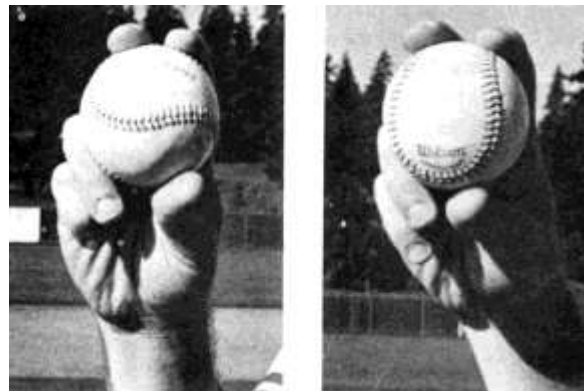
Rushing the Delivery – If the body is going forward before reaching the balanced position then the arm will not be able to catch up. Be sure the throwing arm is extended back before the weight starts forward.

Other pitches

The basic grip for young pitchers was discussed in Pitching Basics. That ‘C’ grip is the basic four seam fastball grip. That pitch tends to run straight and stay higher than others. In addition to that, pitchers at this age will want to experiment with other pitches. At this stage only three others are being described.

Two seam fastball – Gripping the ball with the fingers on the seams produces the two seam fastball which depending on the pressure on the various fingers will have some lateral movement and definitely a sinking action (aka the ‘sinker’).

[Four seam and two seam grips]



Change-up – By holding the ball deep in the palm and using all of fingers, the ball will have more drag as it leaves the hand resulting in less velocity. The pitch should be thrown with the

same body mechanics as the fastball so as not to tip off the batter that it is coming.

[Changeup grip]



Curve-ball – A good overhand curveball requires practice. The flat curve thrown sidearm by many players on their own will not be effective to good batters who recognize it as it tends to stay flat while moving laterally towards the plate. The pitcher should grip the ball similar to a two-seam fastball, pinching the ball between the thumb and a pressure finger on one of the seams. Unlike the fastball or change up where the palm of the hand faces the batter at release, here the palm will face the pitcher at release. The back of the hand is thrown at the batter as the wrist snaps down. The action is similar to snapping your fingers with the ball being rolled forward over the index finger.

[Curve ball grip]



Pitching with Runners on Base

With runners on base, the pitcher should pitch from the Set Position rather than the wind-up. The pitcher must have his pivot foot in contact with the pitching rubber when taking signs from the catcher. Pitcher will stand with his pivot foot parallel with and in contact with the front



of the rubber, feet shoulder width apart, and hands separated at sides (ball in throwing hand). Once signal is

received the hands come together at the waist, the front foot moves back slightly, and the pitching motion is ready to start.



When the pitcher has come to the set position he can see any base by turning his head (not the shoulders). Keep the head vertical and the eyes on a level plane. Having come to the set position, there has to be a discernible pause before throwing home or attempting a pick-off.

From the set position the pitcher may throw to the plate, a base, or step back off the rubber with the pivot foot.

For right-handed pitchers, there are three set positions that can be used: open with the left foot closer to 3rd base, parallel with both feet in line with the plate, and closed with the left foot closer to 1st base. The closed position doesn't give the pitcher a good view of the runner on 1st but does allow for a faster delivery to the plate. The parallel position offers a good view of a runner on 1st and a good quickness to the plate. Finally the open position offers an excellent view of the runner on 1st but a slower delivery to the plate and gives the runner more of a tip-off that the pitcher is 'going home'. For young pitchers, the parallel stance is recommended.

Left-hand pitchers can easily see the runner at 1st (but not one at 3rd). If the left-hand pitcher can develop a motion in which his front foot does not break the plane of the pitching rubber (if it does he has to 'go home' or it is a balk), that will give him the option of throwing to 1st or to home.

Pitchers should recognize the type of runner on the base paths; is the runner likely to attempt to steal or not. The pitcher needs to vary his routine and rhythm in his delivery to home plate. A pattern of looking over twice and then throwing home for example will soon be picked up by the runner. Change the amount of time in your delivery; change the number of 'looks' at the runner.

In delivering the ball to the plate, the pitcher can use the normal delivery he would from the set position, use only a small leg raise, or use a glide step without a leg raise. Ideally if he can do all three it will throw the timing of the runner off.

Throws to 1st base should be on the outfield side of the base, knee high, so the 1st baseman can easily apply the tag.

Most young pitchers forget that if they are uncomfortable with the runner's lead at 1st (or any base), and they are not sure of their ability to throw to the base, they should simply step back off the rubber with their pivot foot, break their hands apart, and either fake a throw to the base, or take a deep breath and start over.

Right-hand pick-off moves to 1st

Pitchers should practice their throws to 1st with a runner on. Three methods can be used with the pitcher determining which works best for. Jump turn involves both feet moving quickly at the same time to allow the pitcher to throw to 1st (good when there is hole in front of the pitching rubber). Pivot turn involves pivoting on the right foot and striding to 1st with the lead foot. Remember that a wild throw from this position will result in two bases as you are still in contact with the rubber. Finally a step-off pivot involves stepping back off the rubber with the pivot foot and spinning the lead foot towards 1st.



Base Running Basics

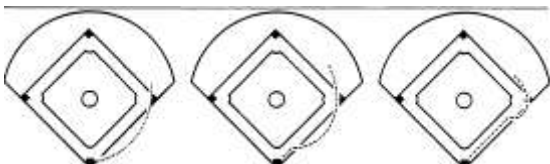
Running Form – players should not swing the arms from side to side or swing the head as they run. The eyes should focus forward to where they are going. The arms should be bent



and close to the side of the body. Arm motion should be straight forward and back. The hands should not be clenched to remove tension. Run on the balls of the feet.

Home to First – The first step out of the batter’s box is always with the back foot. Batter should drop the bat (not throw it) within one or two steps out of the box. Run hard at all times. Touch the front part of the base and do not slow down before hitting the base; slow down after the base! Look to your right to see if there was an overthrow.

The Turn at First Base – For balls hit through the infield, the runner will make a turn at First Base. Depending on the runner and the situation, either an arc from home to first or preferably a straight line down the first base line and then a small arc (20’ from 1st base) will take them out towards 2nd base.



The runner should concentrate on making contact with 1st base as he is running and hit the inside corner of the base while moving towards 2nd. The runner should advance as far as practical towards 2nd, stopping on his right leg in



order to do either a cross-over to come back to 1st or a cross-over to continue to 2nd.

Sliding – On any close play at 2nd, 3rd, or home, the runner should slide to avoid being tagged or to avoid overrunning the base. Run towards



the base with eyes on the base. Take off with the foot that is most natural, bend the take-off leg underneath and sit down while raising the opposite leg off

the ground (knee bent, not straight. Hand should be kept up and the slide should be on the lower hip and outside of the bottom leg.



Players can be asked to sit down squat legged – they will naturally bend one knee behind the other

– this will help determine which foot should be the take-off foot.

Basic Running Drills

Windsprint Drill – line players up on one of the outfield foul lines. Have them run thirty to forty meters in a line to centre field. Walk back and

repeat four or five times. Observe and correct running mechanics.

Home to First Drill – Line up at home plate. Each player simulates a swing and runs hard through first base, then returns to end of line. Repeat observing correct techniques.

Home-Around First – Explain the methods of doing this (various arc's). Coach positions himself in first base coach's box. As in Home to First base drill, players line up at home, take a swing, and execute the run. Observe for proper technique.

Sliding Drill – use the outfield grass. Discuss the method. Each player takes a turn sliding into loose base.

Sliding Drill 2 –As above, but coaches hold a broom handle across the running path. Have the players slide under the broom handle while reaching up with their hands to grab it (coach raises it out of reach).

Base Running Intermediate

The Primary Lead –

The runner on base will take his signs from the coach while in contact with the base. Once he has his signs he should check for the position of the defensive players, then keep his eye on the pitcher and take his primary lead.

The Primary lead from 1st is a premeasured number of steps the runner can take while still being able to return to the base safely. That will depend on the ability of the runner. The average lead at first is three or four steps (eight feet or so) depending on the age and ability of the runner. Do not cross your feet while taking your lead. Returning to the base safely is covered under the Stealing Bases section.

The Primary lead from 2nd starts in the same way. It then is the safe maximum that the runner can take without being picked off. That is dependent on the runner's ability, the pitcher's ability, and the plays the defence may put on to get the runner to stay closer to the base.

The Primary lead from 3rd is determined by the position of the 3rd baseman. The runner should lead off the base a distance equal to the distance the 3rd baseman is from the bag.

The Secondary Lead –

The runner at 1st will take a secondary lead as the pitch is thrown. The runner can take a cross-over step, followed by a hop to land on his right foot as the ball is crossing the plate. That will allow him to react to a ground ball hit, read a fly ball, or move quickly back on a ball caught by the catcher.

The runner at 2nd will take a similar secondary lead as the pitch is thrown. However he may follow his hop with one or two shuffle steps as the infielders will take longer to cover the base from their defensive positions on a throw from the catcher.

The runner at 3rd will take a walking lead as the pitch is thrown. He will walk two or three steps down the line in foul territory landing on his right foot as the ball crosses the plate. He can then either quickly return to the base (in fair territory), react to a hit ball, or if the contact play is on, break for the plate.

Stealing Bases

This section deals with stealing second. The majority of stolen bases are stolen on the pitcher not the catcher. The key is to study the pitcher. He may set a pattern in his pitches and if so it is best to steal on a 'junk' ball rather than a fastball. He may also set a pattern of 'looks' at the runner prior to throwing home. Again if that is the case then knowing the pattern helps the runner know when to go.

In stealing, the runner breaks for 2nd as soon as he knows the pitcher is committed to going home with the pitch. Pivot on the right foot and use a cross-over step with the left leg. The left leg is pulled back helping the pivot and the first stride. Keep the weight forward with the upper body staying low at the start. Drive the legs hard on a direct line to 2nd.



On a steal attempt or hit and run, the runner should look towards home plate midway to second to see if the ball has been hit (line drive or fly ball) which might require a return to 1st.

A one-way lead can be used to get the pitcher to show his 'move' to 1st. The lead is a bit larger than normal and the weight is on the right-foot. The runner intends to return to 1st and to have the pitcher show his 'move' which will be good to know for when the 'steal' is actually called.

Reading Left-handed pitchers – Look for some of these when determining whether the pitcher might be attempting a pick-off: the pivot leg

may dip when going home and be kept straight when going to 1st; the front foot might be further forward if he intends to go home and closer if he is thinking of 1st; the upper body may lean towards home when pitching and stay upright when going to 1st; the front shoulder will move towards the runner on a throw to 1st; the position of the hands might vary; watch for patterns!

Reading Right-handed pitchers – Look for some of these with 'righties': variation in stance; he must lift the right heel to clear the rubber so if it moves first, get back; If he has an open left shoulder (to get a better look at the runner) and stays that way as he is moving from the 'set' he is likely coming to 1st; the pitcher may lean to home when throwing to the plate and stay erect when coming to 1st.

Diving Back – To return quickly to the base the runner will pivot quickly, do one cross-over step, and dive back to the bag reaching out with his right hand to touch the back corner of the bag closest to him. The head should be turned to the outfield side to avoid being hit in the face with a low throw. If the runner returns without diving back, then the lead-off was likely not large enough.

Practices

Pitchers and base-stealers can practice together, each trying to get the better of the other. Remember that the runner should always be using his batting helmet in these practices to avoid injury.

Base Coach Role

The two base coaches should understand the game, think ahead, and know their players capabilities.

First Base Coach

Watch for pitch sequences or tip offs on pitches. Assist the runner verbally on ground balls. Help the runner to know when to make an aggressive turn in order to advance to 2nd. Remind your runner of the game situation (outs, counts, pitcher moves etc.). Remind the runner of his responsibilities on ground balls and fly balls and to check the defence after each pitch. Have a good idea of the outfield throwing capabilities.

Always go around home plate when returning to a 3rd base dugout, do not cut across the field.

Third Base Coach

Give clear signs to the runners and make sure they know how a sign can be removed. Make sure all runners can see your signs. Finish sign sequence with a definite end (clap of some other indicator). The runner at 2nd is your responsibility. Remind runner at 2nd to check defence after each pitch. Help the runner with fly balls and when to tag up. Direct the slide as the runner approaches 3rd. When sending a runner home, get down the line to read the play better. Have clear verbal instructions for runners at 3rd. Remind the runner at 3rd of the catcher's pick. Remind the runner at 3rd to take his lead in fair territory and return in fair territory. Help the runner know when to advance on passed balls and wild pitches. Inform umpires, opposing coaches, and score keepers of any changes.

Go around home plate when returning to a 1st base dugout, not cut across the field.

If you are in charge of the lineup, meet with the umpires when they call for the plate talk, do not leave them waiting for you to finish other tasks.

Pre-Game, Pre-Practice Routine

In addition to doing the Dynamic Stretches before each game or practice, it is important that a routine be followed to get the players ready for the game or the subsequent activities in the practice. Following is a routine that can be used for most of the younger ages. Older teams can vary this by having the coach hit ground balls using a fungo bat. For those older teams capable of running an infield prior to the game or at the start of a practice, and pre-game time allows, the coach can hit balls to the infield positions asking them to throw it to specific bases and or to 'turn a double play'. When the infield isn't available, short fly balls in the outfield will help get the team ready for the game.

Progressive Throwing Warm-up

Before every practice and game, you should practice and repeat the same progressive warm-up. Not only does it slowly warm their arm muscles up before they begin throwing long distances, it also allows them to repeat the same throwing mechanics by isolating the different stages of the throw.

Grip, Wrist and Elbow

1. Players kneel on their throwing side knee
2. Their glove side foot is in front of them pointing towards their partner
3. They hold their throwing elbow at shoulder height in front of their face
4. Holding the ball in a 4 seam grip, they flip the ball to their partner using only their wrist
5. After 10 repetitions, they begin straightening their elbow after flipping the ball.

Hands in Throwing Position

1. Players continue to kneel on their throwing side knee
2. They stretch out their arm and point glove at the target.

3. They hold the ball behind their head with their elbow above their shoulder.
4. Their arm should be bent and the back of their hand is facing their head.
5. They throw the ball to their partner while simultaneously bringing their glove towards their armpit.
6. Their throwing hand finishes across their glove side knee.

Line up shoulders and toes

1. Players stand perpendicular to their target by lining up their shoulders and toe to toe towards target.
2. Their hands are together at their chest.
3. They separate their hands by moving them towards the ground.
4. They glove moves into a position that points at the target.
5. The ball makes a 'C' movement from their thigh up into throwing position behind them.
6. They throw the ball by rotating hips towards partner and releasing the ball in front of them

Progressive Fielding Warm-up

Before every practice and game, you should practice and repeat the same progressive warm-up. This warm-up will give each player multiple repetitions of using their hands to receive a ground ball and will also remind them of a proper fielding position during the game.

Receive a Rolled Ball from Two Knees (Progress to 1-hopper)

1. Players kneel on both knees about 6 feet away.
2. Their knees are separated, the back of their glove is on the ground and their hand is over the glove.
3. A ball is rolled back and forth.
4. The player snaps the ball up with their glove and collapses hand on top of ball.

Receive a Rolled Ball from Fielding Pos.
(Progress to 1-hopper)

1. Players move to a proper fielding position.
2. The top of their head is pointed to sky.
3. The back of their glove is on the ground and their hand is over the glove.
4. A ball is rolled back and forth.
5. The player snaps the ball up with their glove and collapses hand on top of ball.

Receive a Rolled Ball from Charging

1. A ball is rolled to a partner.
2. Each player charges the ball, fields grounder and throws ball in air back to partner.
3. Switch who is fielding the ground ball after 10 repetitions.

Practice Plans

The following is a set of practice plans that can be used for the weekly practice sessions with your team. You may need to change them for your age group or for the number of attendees you have. One of the key points in developing your practice plan is to observe what occurred in the previous game. That often indicates what needs worked on.



Practice Plans

The practice plans, and some of the other material contained in this package is taken from *Getting Started in Baseball* which is published by the Coaching Association of Canada with sponsorship from 3M. Baseball Ontario is grateful to the CAC for allowing us the use of these materials.

PRACTICE PLAN

1

DATE _____ TEAM _____ LOCATION _____

WARM-UP

15
MIN

Glove-Ball Relay

Players: 3 groups of 4 players
Equipment: 3 gloves and 3 balls per group

Groups line up single file. Each group has 3 baseballs. Place 3 gloves 10 metres apart in front of each group. First player from each line picks up a baseball, runs, and places it in one of the gloves, then repeats the run with the second and third ball. The next player retrieves the balls one at a time and returns them to the third player. Players 3 and 4 continue the drill. When a group finishes, all players sit down.

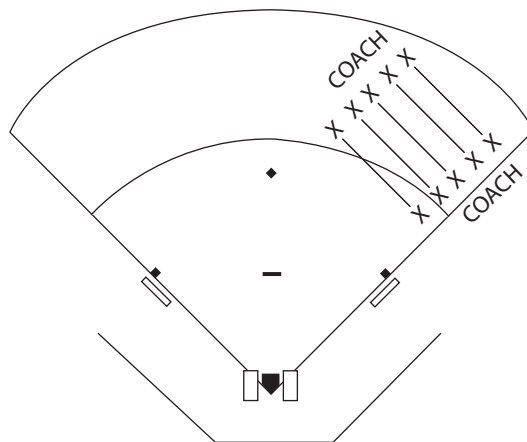
Stretch

- Led by the coach

THROWING AND RECEIVING

10
MIN

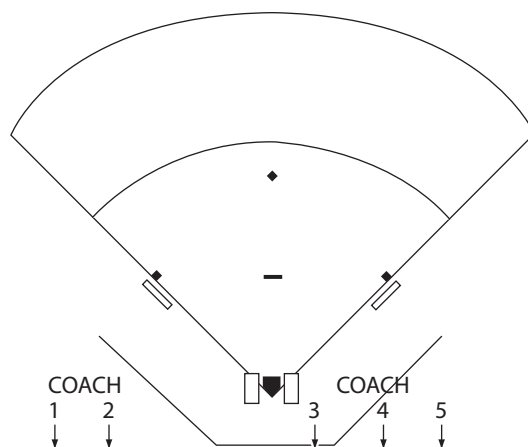
- In the outfield throwing from first baseline into centre field
- Players in pairs - 1 ball per pair
- Spend one minute on each of the following:
 1. Underhand toss
 2. No glove - catch with two hands
 3. No glove - catch with one hand
 4. With glove-catch ball in middle of body
 5. Grip
 6. Throw at a target
 7. Step onto opposite foot
 8. Full arm extension backward
 9. Throw from sitting position
 10. Throw slightly longer distances



BATTING

20
MIN

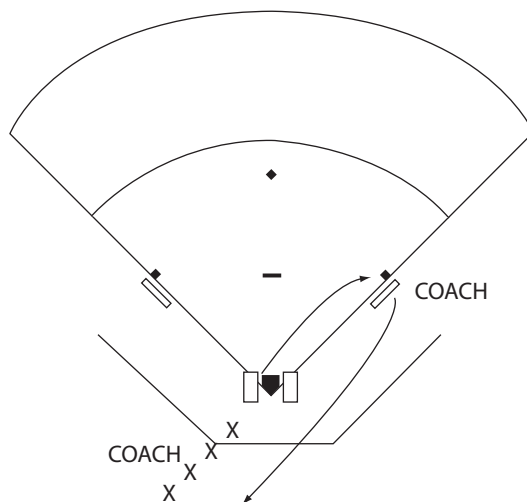
- Facing the screen behind the plate
- Groups of 3 players, taking turns, 1 bat per group
 - 1. Stance and practice swings
 - 2. Tees — 4 in total (1 per group) and 5 balls per group. Players take turns hitting 5 balls off the tee into the screen. Each player should get 4 or 5 turns.



BASERUNNING



- Home to first base
- Players line up at home plate
Pretend to swing the bat and run to first base, then return to home plate

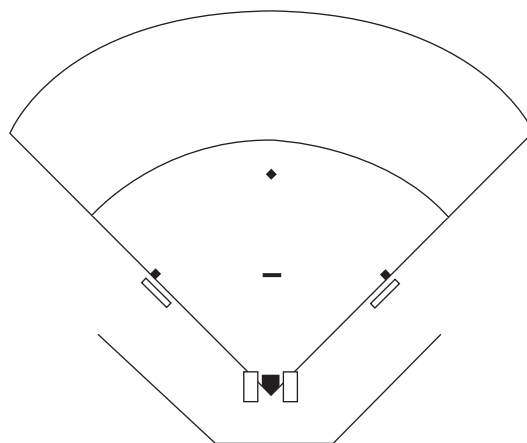


GAME: T-BALL



- Players: 2 teams (8-15 players per team)
- Equipment: bases, ball, bat, adjustable batting tee, baseball field or open playing field

Teams take batting and fielding positions as in baseball. The game begins with the coach placing the ball on the batting tee when all players in the field are ready. The batter puts the ball in play by batting it off the tee. Outs are made in the usual way. All players on a team bat every inning. The last batter in each inning can be put out by having the catcher touch the home plate with the ball.



COOL-DOWN



- Stretch
- New Rule - Dropped 3rd Strike
- Players put equipment away

NEXT PRACTICE: _____

PRACTICE PLAN

2

DATE _____ TEAM _____ LOCATION _____

WARM-UP

15
MIN

Base Tag

Players: entire team in infield area

Equipment: set of bases

Players play a game of tag within the infield area of the park. One player is chosen to be "it." Bases represent safe areas. Players standing on a base may not be tagged, but only two players at a time are allowed on a base. When a third player comes along, the first player at that base must leave.

Stretch

- Led by the coach

Sprints

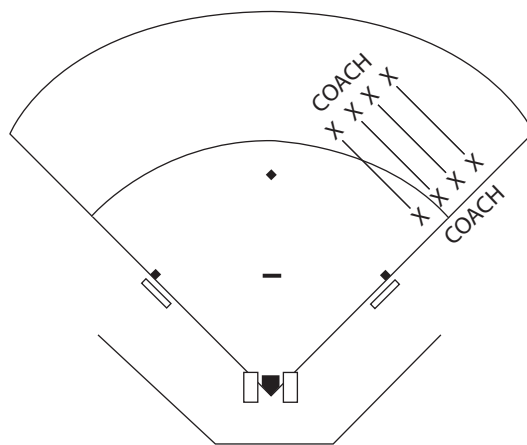
- 4 sprints of 40 metres. Walk back — knees high.

THROWING AND RECEIVING

10
MIN

- Spend one minute on each of the following:

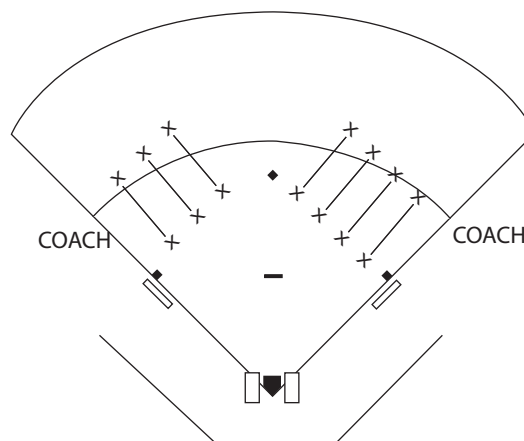
1. Underhand toss
2. Proper grip
3. Full arm extension back
4. Elbow above shoulder
5. Throw from both knees
6. Throw from sitting position
7. Aim at a target
8. Catch ball with two hands
9. Step onto opposite foot
10. Long toss



FIELDING GROUND BALLS

10
MIN

- Players in pairs — 1 ball per pair
- Using an underhand motion, roll ground balls back and forth

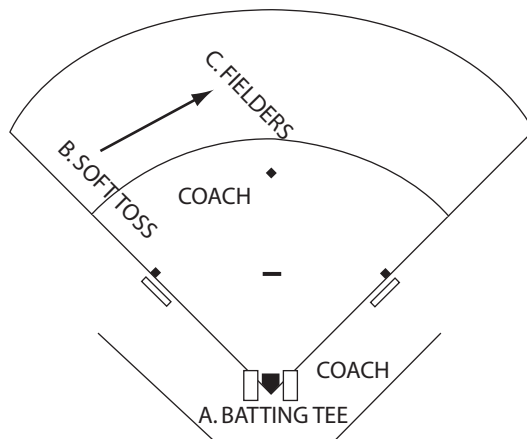


BATTING PRACTICE

• 3 groups of 4 or 5 players



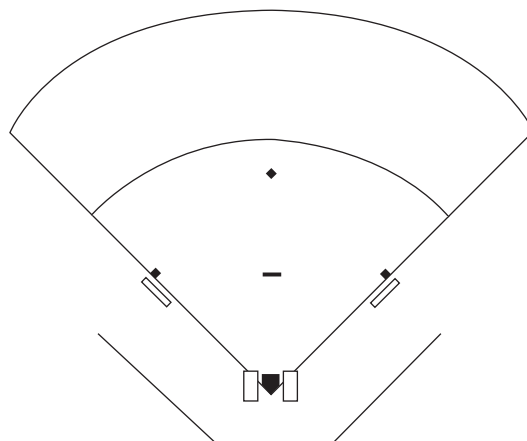
- Groups rotate between stations after 8 minutes
- A. Tees: Set up behind the plate facing the screen with hitters hitting into it.
- B. Soft Toss: Facing centre field, but set up along the third base line in the outfield. One hitter at a time.
- C. Fielders: In centre field, fielding for the soft toss station.



GAME: PUNT & GO



- Players: 2 teams (6-10 per team)
- Equipment: bases, foam football
- Teams take batting and fielding positions; the batting team provides the pitcher. Pitcher “snaps” the ball through his/her legs to the batter. The batter punts (kicks) the ball into the field and then runs the bases. The fielding team makes an out as in a game of baseball.



COOL-DOWN



- Jog one lap of the field
- Stretch
- New Rule - Infield Fly
- Players put equipment away

NEXT PRACTICE: _____

PRACTICE PLAN

3

DATE _____ TEAM _____ LOCATION _____

WARM-UP

15
MIN

Chain Tag

Players: entire team in infield area

Two players link hands and try to tag other players with their free hands. Tagged players must join the chain. Game ends when all players are caught or if the chain is broken.

Stretch

- Led by the coach

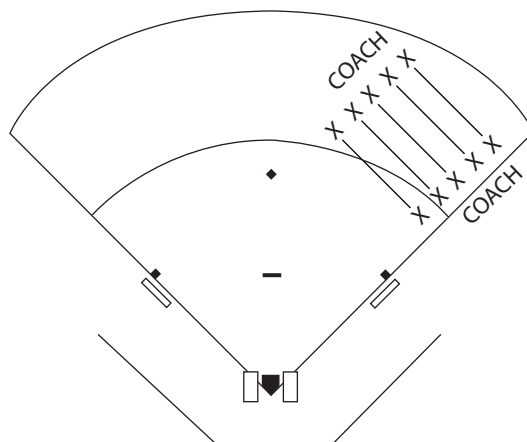
Sprints

- 4 sprints of 40 metres from lead-off position. Walk back.

THROWING AND RECEIVING

10
MIN

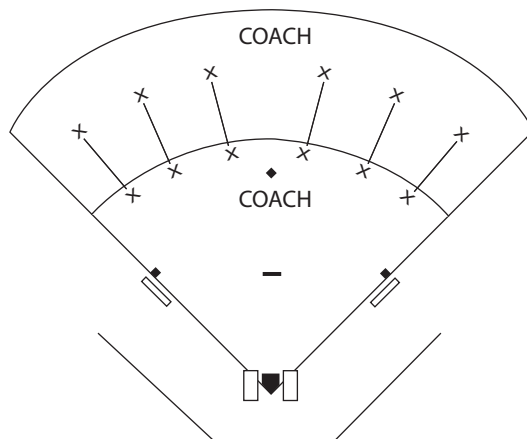
- Pairs, 1 ball — in the outfield.
- Spend one minute on each of the following:
 1. Grip
 2. Catch with two hands
 3. Throw at a target
 4. Catch ball in middle of body
 5. Step onto opposite foot
 6. Throw from both knees
 7. Throw from sitting position
 8. Throw from one knee
 9. Catch balls thrown in all directions
 10. 30-second timing - count number of throws



FLY BALLS

10
MIN

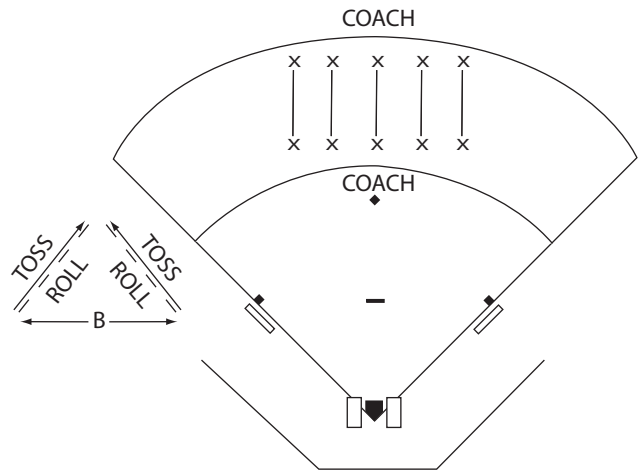
- Pairs, 1 ball — in outfield, 8 metres apart
- Toss underhand fly balls to partner
- Gradually increase the height of the tosses
- Spread out for safety
- When moving for the ball, run smoothly on the balls of the feet
- Catch the ball at eye level with two hands



PICK-UPS

15
MIN

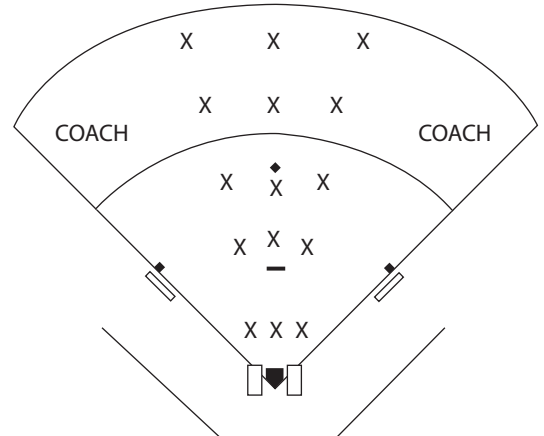
- Pairs, 1 ball — in outfield, 10 metres apart
- Player A rolls ball to the right
- Player B shuffles to field ball and tosses back to A
- A rolls the ball to the left
- B shuffles to field ball and tosses back to A
- Repeat for a total of 10 in each direction



THROWING RELAY

10
MIN

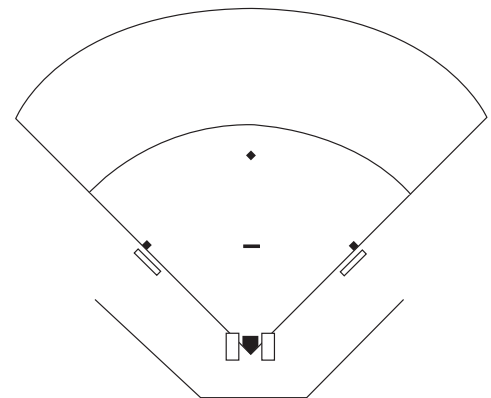
- 3 groups of 5 players — 1 ball for each group
- Players evenly spaced from home plate to outfield fence
- Ball starts at home plate and is thrown from player to player to the fence and back to home
- Players will learn to throw accurately and turn the proper way
- Repeat 3 times



GAME: BASEBALL SOCCER

20
MIN

- Players: 2 teams (6-10 per team)
- Equipment: bases, rubber playground ball or soccer ball
- Teams take batting and field positions. Play begins with the pitcher rolling the ball over home plate. The batter kicks the ball into the field and then runs the bases. The fielding team makes an out as in a game of baseball. A player can be tagged out only by contacting him/her below the waist with the ball while he/she is off the base.



COOL-DOWN

5
MIN

- Jog one lap
- Stretch
- New Rule — Catcher's Interference
- Players put equipment away

NEXT PRACTICE: _____

PRACTICE PLAN

4

DATE _____ TEAM _____ LOCATION _____

WARM-UP

15
MIN

Baserunning Relay

Players: entire team in two groups

Equipment: 1 ball and glove per group, set of bases

Both groups are behind home plate. Place ball in a glove on each side of second base. Group A's relay route is from home to 1st to 2nd; Group B's from home to 3rd to 2nd. A player from each team runs to second base to retrieve their ball, runs back, and hands it to the next player who runs back and places the ball in the glove at 2nd base, then runs back. When all players in a group have run the relay they sit down. (Make sure home plate area is kept clear for runners.)

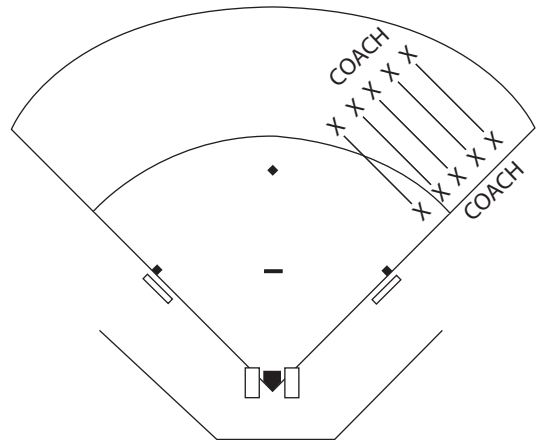
Stretch

- Each player leads one stretch

THROWING AND RECEIVING

10
MIN

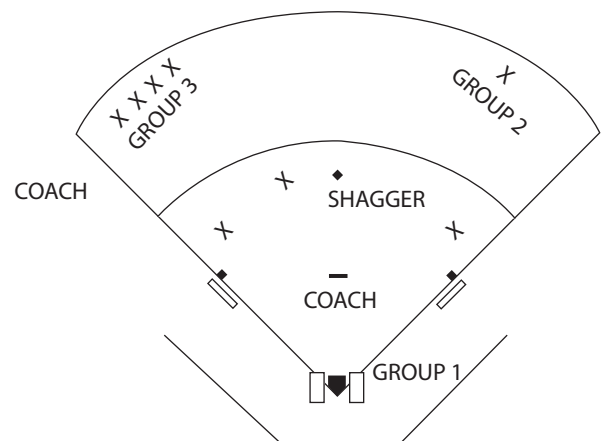
- Pairs, 1 ball — in the outfield
- Players play catch on their own
- Begin close together and gradually increase the distance and force of their throws



BATTING PRACTICE

25
MIN

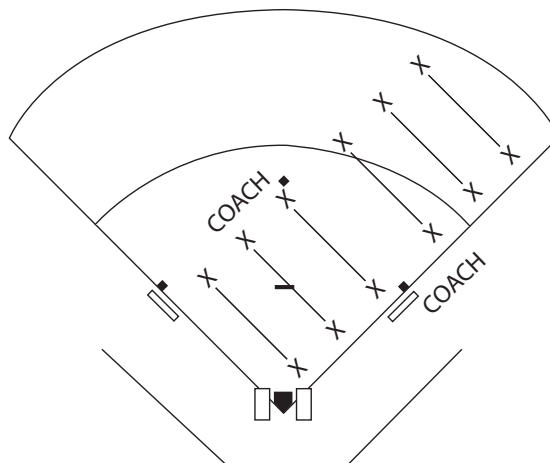
- 3 groups of 4 or 5 players at stations
 - Groups rotate between stations
1. Hitters: - Batter gets 7 swings — runs to 1st after last swing
- Coach tosses from 8 metres away from behind screen
 2. Fielders: - Field balls hit by hitters
- Toss ball to “shagger” behind second base (shagger protected by player or screen)
 3. Tees: - Players hit balls off tees into fence in the outfield



INFIELD PLAY



- Pairs, 1 ball
- Player A rolls ball to player B
- B fields ball and throws it to A
- A acts as first baseman
- Repeat 10 times
- Reverse roles

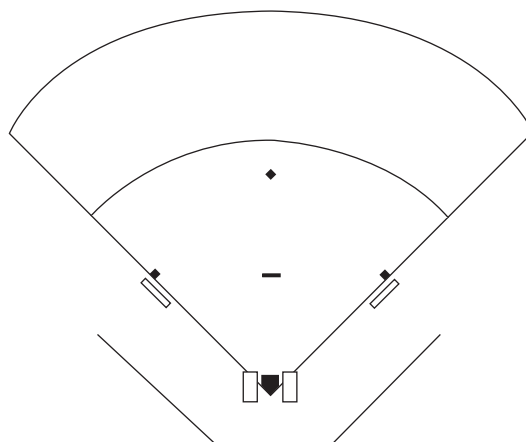


GAME: SCRUB



Players: any number can play
 Equipment: bases, ball, bats, gloves

Four players are chosen to begin as batters. The remaining players are positioned in the field. The coach is the pitcher. Play begins with one person batting. The coach pitches the ball to the batter. Each batter gets 3 swings to put the ball in play and runs the bases. An out is made by catching a batted fly ball or by throwing a batter or runner out. A batter continues to bat and run bases until put out. When a fly ball is caught, the batter switches positions with that person. When an out is made any other way, the catcher becomes a new batter, and all defensive players rotate up one position. Variations: Vary the game to suit the players, e.g. 2 foul balls make an out, run bases in reverse order.



COOL-DOWN



- Stretch
- New Rule — Offensive Interference
- Players put equipment away

NEXT PRACTICE: _____

PRACTICE PLAN

5

DATE _____ TEAM _____ LOCATION _____

WARM-UP

15
MIN

Base Tag

Players: entire team in infield area

Equipment: set of bases

Players play a game of tag within the infield area of the park. One player is chosen to be "it." Bases represent safe areas. Players standing on a base may not be tagged, but only 2 players at a time are allowed on a base. When a third player comes along, the first player at that base must leave.

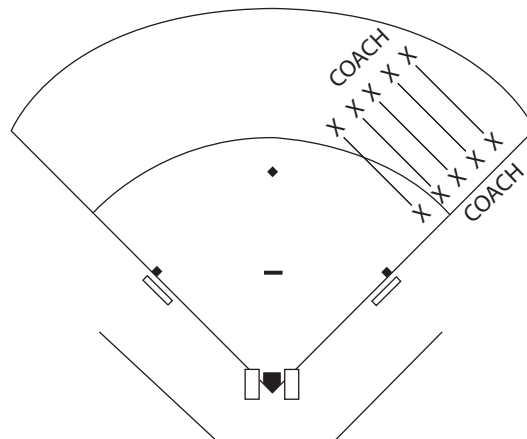
Stretch

- Led by 2 players

THROWING AND RECEIVING

10
MIN

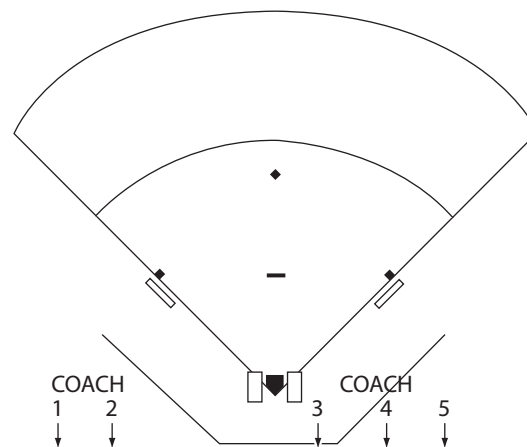
- Pairs, 1 ball — in the outfield.
- Spend one minute on each of the following:
 1. Grip
 2. Proper throwing mechanics
 3. Catch with two hands
 4. Throw at a target
 5. Throw from both knees
 6. Throw from one knee
 7. Throw from sitting position
 8. Throw while running toward partner
 9. & 10. Long toss



BATTING PRACTICE

10
MIN

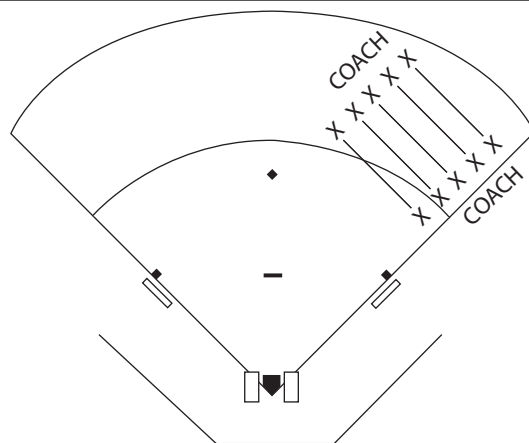
- Pairs, 5 balls
- One hitter and one tosser
- Soft toss
- All hitters hit into the screen behind the plate
- On many fields, both sides of the screen can be used
- Spread out players for safety
- Hitters try to hit line drives into the screen
- Partners switch roles after 5 hits



PITCHER AND CATCHER

10
MIN

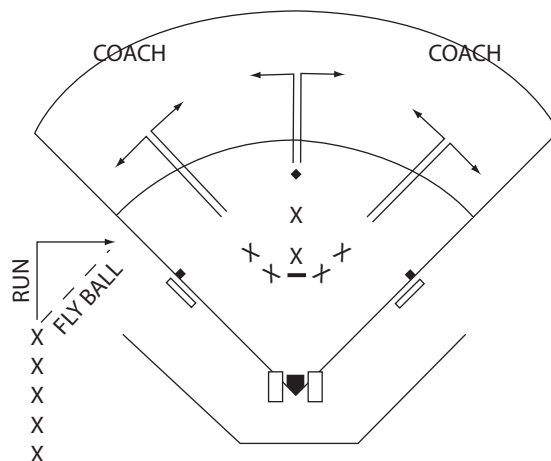
- Pairs, 1 ball
- One player acts as pitcher and the other as catcher
- Pitcher throws to catcher who calls strikes and balls
- Switch roles after 20 pitches



PASS PATTERNS FOR FLY BALLS

10
MIN

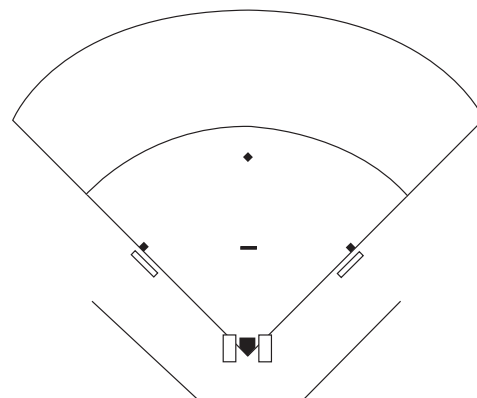
- 3 groups
- First player runs 10 metres and breaks right
- Second player throws fly ball to first player
- Second player runs 10 metres and breaks left
- Third player throws fly ball to second player
- After catching ball, player goes to end of line



GAME: T-BALL

20
MIN

- Players: 2 teams (8-15 players per team)
- Equipment: bases, ball, bat, adjustable batting tee, baseball field or open playing field
- Teams take batting and fielding positions as in baseball. The game begins with the coach placing the ball on the batting tee when all players in the field are ready. The batter puts the ball in play by batting it off the tee. Outs are made in the usual way. All players on a team bat every inning. The last batter in each inning can be put out by having the catcher touch home plate with the ball.



COOL-DOWN

5
MIN

- Stretch
- New Rule — Pitcher Wind-up and Stretch Position
- Players put equipment away

NEXT PRACTICE: _____