The purpose of the Baseball Excellence Coaches Planner is to provide coaches with drills tips and checkpoints that will help them teach and reinforce the skills necessary to play baseball. Each drill includes as many of the essential skills as possible. They are intended to be fast-paced and fun for the players. The use of ‘stations’ is highly recommended to make the best use of allowed practice time and keep everyone occupied and learning. This planner will not only prepare players to play the game but will help give them the skills necessary to advance.

Particular emphasis is placed on catching and throwing the baseball. These basic skills are an integral part of the game and are too often left to chance and/or under coached. Baseball coaches should give the teaching of these skills high priority.

An everyday practice would look like this:

1. Warm-up, stretching, form running and throwing short to long toss
2. Defensive skill work
3. Batting practice
4. Base running and/or conditioning drills
5. Short talk.

The usual baseball practice should be preferably two hours. 50-60% of a practice should be spent on hitting. Hitting should be a part of every practice. Many other skills can also be drilled during a typical BP, for instance-bullpens and fungos. Infielders should take ground balls every day.

The format of this Planner is for 2-weeks of pre-season practices. The coach then has the freedom to use what drills he feels are necessary for the progress of his team. During the season the mistakes and weaknesses found in games will tell the coach what needs to be practiced and reinforced.

Use the first few days of practice to evaluate and place your players. Use infield and outfield fungos to help determine where you will position them.

A capable coaching staff is essential to the success of a baseball team. The head coach should have at least 2 assistants. Defensive and offensive stations require the help of these additional coaches. A coach should have his practice outlined for each day. Before each practice he should discuss with his coaches what he wants to accomplish and what he wants them to do.

TIPS:

• Allow water breaks between stations. Individual breaks take too much time.
• On a baseball field and during practice, everyone should hustle. Players jog everywhere they go-no walking.
• All players should participate in picking up baseballs, equipment, setting up the field, etc.
• Coaches and players should be at the field and ready to go 10-15 minutes before practice.
• Practice has an enemy. The enemy is time.
• Plan practices ahead so there is no hesitation about what to do.
• Some teams have limited use of a field. If for instance the time is limited to 1 hour, have the players at the facility 1/2-hour ahead of time and get the stretch run, and throw routine accomplished off to the side. The time can also be used for specialty drills such as rundowns. Skull and teaching sessions can also be included.
• A team ultimately plays exactly the way they practice. If you expect 100% effort in games you should get 100% in practices. Intensity should be kept at game speed throughout practice. There is no magic light switch to turn off and on. This is difficult to do but if the coach requires undivided attention to the details, those ‘little things’ he will develop quality players.
• Try to make practice fun and challenging at the same time. Use positive reinforcement.
• Because of the time factor, practices should be conducted with a sense of urgency. Spend the first few practices teaching your players how practices are going to be organized and what is expected of them. Early in the season this will have to be constantly reinforced. After a while it then becomes routine.
• Spend time before or after practices with an individual that needs help in a certain area. A lot of teaching can be accomplished in a short time with one-on-one instruction.
• It is important to work on defensive drills immediately after the stretch, run and throw routine. The arms are still hot and fresh and the players’ concentration level is higher. BP will be the ‘carrot, that will help them get through defensive work at a higher intensity.

(It is suggested you print this Planner. Place the pages in a bookbinder. Some coaches laminate them.)
## SAMPLE PRE-SEASON PRACTICE SCHEDULE

(Approximately 2 hours)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2PM</td>
<td><em>Run to centerfield and back Stretch Form Run Short to Long Toss Continually</em></td>
<td>Run to centerfield and back Stretch Form Run Short to Long Toss Reinforce</td>
<td>Run to centerfield and back Stretch Form Run Short to Long Toss Proper</td>
<td>Run to centerfield and back Stretch Form Run Short to Long Toss Throwing</td>
<td>Run to centerfield and back Stretch Form Run Short to Long Toss Mechanics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>week 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:20</td>
<td>Pitchers Fielding Practice Fungos to outfielders</td>
<td>Throwing to Bases (evaluate players) Catcher Drills</td>
<td>Infield-Outfield Priorities Double Plays Slow Rollers</td>
<td>Throwing to Bases Double Plays Catchers Drills</td>
<td>Intra squad Game-Use pitching machine or coach instead of pitchers-no catcher (Have 1 round of BP-6 swings and then play game)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:50</td>
<td>Teach Base Running</td>
<td>Rundowns (from pick-offs)</td>
<td>Bunt Defense</td>
<td>1st &amp; 3rd Defense</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00</td>
<td>Teach bunting-use pitching machines Batting Practice (Fungos to infielders) (Outfielders break on all balls)</td>
<td>Batting Practice (Fungos to infielders) (Outfielders break on all balls)</td>
<td>Batting Practice (Fungos to infielders) (Outfielders break on all balls)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30</td>
<td>Batting Practice (teach hitting philosophy)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:50</td>
<td>Quarterbacks</td>
<td>Base Running</td>
<td>Quarterbacks</td>
<td>Base Running</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PM</td>
<td>*Stretch, Run, Throw</td>
<td>Stretch, Run, Throw</td>
<td>Stretch, Run, Throw</td>
<td>Stretch, Run, Throw</td>
<td>Stretch, Run, Throw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>week 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:20</td>
<td>Relay Race (entire team) Double Plays Catcher Drills</td>
<td>Pitchers Fielding Practice Fungos to outfielders</td>
<td>Infield- Outfield Fungos (DoubleCuts) Catcher Drills</td>
<td>Infield-Outfield Priorities Bunt Defense Double Plays</td>
<td>(1 round BP) Intra squad Game-Use pitchers and catchers (If time is short, start all hitters with a 1-1 count.) [No walks-swing the bats]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:50</td>
<td>Bunt Defense</td>
<td>Pick-offs and rundowns</td>
<td>Throwing to Bases</td>
<td>Slow Rollers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00</td>
<td>Batting Practice (Fungos to infielders) Bullpens</td>
<td>Batting Practice + Situational Hitting with Base Runners</td>
<td>Batting Practice + Situational Hitting with Base Runners</td>
<td>Batting Practice (Fungos to infielders) Short Bullpens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:50</td>
<td>Base running</td>
<td>Quarterbacks</td>
<td>Base running</td>
<td>Quarterbacks</td>
<td>Quarterbacks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tips:**
- Short talk every day after practice and games, usually on the outfield grass down the foul line.
- Practice at 100% effort. How you practice is how you play. Skills are developed at practice. They are displayed in games.
- Pitchers Fielding Practice (PFP) can be used in lieu of a bullpen for the pitchers. If they have thrown too much they may ‘shadow pitch.’
- Stay flexible. If a drill needs more time, take it.

**Intra squad game**- have coaches fill any outfield positions or leave area vacant and call hit or out. Teach while game is unfolding. Get in as many innings as time allows. When pitchers are used, count pitches. *Catchers* can call strikes and balls.
STRETCHING, FORM RUNNING AND LONG TOSS ROUTINE

*This routine should be performed every day, before practices and games. The stretches get the muscles ready for activity and help guard against injury. The form running assists the ballplayer with agility. The long toss program builds arm strength. Before stretching, a light run to get the heart rate up. This is team time not a gossip session. Concentrate to improve. Stretches should be done with a steady pull for a count of about 10 seconds, don’t bounce. Start with the top of the body and work down. Form running should be done with maximum effort and strict attention to proper mechanics. These drills help improve running mechanics and increase speed and agility. Run about 70° down and back. Divide players into equal groups.

Accomplish this routine as a team. Start your practices on time. Don’t wait for late players.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRETCHES</th>
<th>FORM RUNNING</th>
<th>TOSS-LONG TOSS (approximately 10 minutes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head rotations- rotate head clockwise and counter clockwise to loosen neck muscles.</td>
<td>Secondary lead and steal - ¾ speed. Take 2 shuffle hops and run. Everyone faces the same way.</td>
<td>Begin at 30 feet. 8-10 tosses at 50% maximum effort. Throw with a limited arc and use correct throwing mechanics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arm Circles- swing arms in small circles out straight from sides gradually increasing size. Rotate direction.</td>
<td>Side Shuffles- Face the same way. Run, sliding heel to heel. No crossover strides. This works the hip flexors and groin.</td>
<td>60 feet-6-8 throws.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-left shoulder stretch- take right arm across chest and pull with left so that the right rear shoulder stretches (deltoid). Switch arms.</td>
<td>Butt Kickers- in normal running position take short strides trying to bring heels into the rear with every running step.</td>
<td>90 feet- 6-8 throws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right–left triceps- take right arm overhead and close to the ear. With the other hand pull back to stretch triceps. Switch arms.</td>
<td>Power skips- Like a regular skip except the emphasis is in a power movement up. Put a lot of air under the feet. Pump arms in conjunction with opposite leg driving up.</td>
<td>120 feet- 5-6 throws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrist stretch- extend arm, fingers pointing up. Grab fingers and pull toward you and hold. Switch arms.</td>
<td>Cariocas- facing the same way, run sideways with a step over the leg and then a step behind.</td>
<td>160+ - 5-6 throws (Advanced only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest stretch- extend arms behind back, palms out. Partner slowly raises arms upward to tolerance. Stand straight, don’t bend at the waist.</td>
<td>Backward run- run backwards, lean and extend the legs out with each stride.</td>
<td>Come back in to 45° and throw briskly, on a line, moving the feet to catch and quickly throw.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trunk rotations- with legs spread lean over and roll in a clockwise direction. Switch direction. (3-4 rotations)</td>
<td>Walking lunges- (Butt busters)- these are done like lunges in strength training except go the full 70° staying low without coming up or resting the arms.</td>
<td>Listen to your body. Throw to tolerance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing hamstring- feet together with knees locked. Bend at waist and reach for toes. Do not bounce or rest hands on knees. Hang for desired time.</td>
<td>Straight sprints- all-out sprint for 70° with emphasis on correct running mechanics.</td>
<td>Use crow hop when necessary. Throw one-hop if distance is unattainable without large arc. Use this practice time to develop 4-seam grip on every throw.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For youth and advanced baseball
Throwing a baseball correctly is a requirement of the game. Players may get away with poor arm action* in their early years, but as the field gets larger and the speed of the game increases, good throwing mechanics and arm strength become absolutes and are taken for granted. At the ages of 13, 14 and 15 too many players leave the game of baseball because they were never taught to throw properly. Teaching a young player to throw and catch correctly may be the single most important thing a youth coach can do for a player. But it is the most under-coached.

LOWER BODY
Throwing starts with the feet. The right foot should be perpendicular to the target.

**Teaching Tip:** Point the right anklebone at the target. (RH player)

The front foot should land slightly closed (10-15°) and on a straight line with the target.

**Teaching Tip:** Point the toes of the front foot just to the right of the target as the front foot lands.

UPPER BODY
The lead arm should be elbow high and aligned with the throwing arm.

**Teaching Tip:** Point the lead arm elbow at the target- use it as a 'gun sight.'

The throwing arm should be elbow high and aligned with the head and lead arm.

**Teaching Tip:** The arm is in a ‘cocked’ (L) position with the ball pointing backwards and fingers on top of the ball. The ball is thrown out in front of the head with the wrist outside the angle of the elbow.

**Teaching Tip:** Throw the ball when “nose is over toes.”

Throw the ball with a smooth, fluid follow through.

**Teaching Tip:** Show the back of the rear shoulder to the target on follow through.

*ARM ACTION
Arm action is defined as the circular movement of the throwing arm as it leaves the glove, moves down, back and up and delivers the baseball. An infielder’s arm action is different from a pitcher/outfielder in that the pitcher takes his arm down, back and up and the infielder/catcher takes the ball out of his glove straight back to the cocked position (the infielder/catcher needs a quicker release). The thumb must be under the baseball and the fingers on top. The wrist must be supple but firm so it does not flop off to either side. It stays behind the baseball all the way to release.
THROWING CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRIP</th>
<th>1. Make sure the grip is a 4-seam fastball grip and the ball is not choked back into the palm. Between the time the player catches the ball and the time his arm is in the cocked position, he should have the ball in a 4-seam grip. (He should practice that grip everyday as he plays catch until it becomes automatic.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FEET</td>
<td>2. Feet- Throwing starts with the feet. Usually when a player makes a throwing error it is because he didn’t have his feet set properly. The anklebone of his throwing-side foot should be pointed at the target (closed). The lead foot should land slightly (10°) closed and pointing at the target.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM ALIGNMENT</td>
<td>3. Arm alignment- Both arms should be aligned with the head and shoulders. (If he were a pitcher, his arms would be aligned with second base.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELBOW</td>
<td>4. Elbow shoulder high- Whether he has the arm action of a pitcher or outfielder or catcher or infielder, his elbow should be at shoulder height the instant before he brings his arm forward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAD ARM</td>
<td>5. Lead arm- The lead arm should be shoulder high also and aligned properly. The lead arm elbow can be pointed at the target. He should pull his elbow down past his hip and bring his glove into his chest as he releases the ball.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXTENSION</td>
<td>6. Extension- The ball is released out in front of the head and not beside the head. The fingers remain on top of the ball and do not flop off to the side. The arm snaps to full extension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMOOTH FOLLOW THROUGH</td>
<td>7. Smooth follow through- Finish the throw with a smooth fluid motion and the head out over the front foot.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tips:
- As the hand leaves the glove, keep the thumb underneath the baseball and the fingers on top.
- The hand arm and elbow form a slightly expanded ‘L’ with the baseball facing back.
- Do not throw the baseball until the front foot has landed. (A very common mistake)
- Keep the front shoulder pointing at the target until the front foot lands.
- Release the ball at full extension. The grip should be 4-seam
- Look to see if the lead shoulder is closed when the player’s front foot lands. It is common for a player to ‘open’ his front side too early, resulting in added stress on the arm and inaccurate throws.
- Teaching a player to throw correctly is one of the most important things a coach can do.
- Pay close attention to arm action. Common faults are hooking the ball, low elbow, turning the wrist, improper ‘cocked position’, flailing, long arming, wrist inside the angle created by the elbow and ‘pie throwing’.
CATCHING THE BASEBALL

The ability to catch and throw a baseball is basic to the game and yet it deceptively difficult. Watching accomplished baseball players throw and catch makes it look very easy. Players who are never properly taught these skills have an unproductive baseball experience and eventually leave the game. As coaches and parents you can play an important part in the continuance of this great game by teaching your youngsters how to throw and catch. For the very young it is suggested that the coach use ‘reduced injury factor’ baseballs. The fear of getting hit will hinder a young player’s catching mechanics. In fact you may begin by using tennis balls. Tennis balls will remove some initial fear and they have the added benefit of requiring the player to bring the ball into his body as he catches it. The term for this is ‘soft hands’. Baseball players require soft hands. Instead of keeping their hands and fingers rigid and their arms extended as they catch, they should relax their fingers, flex their arms and bring the ball in toward their body as it enters the glove. Begin at a distance of 15-20 feet. Easy tosses at first and because the coach is much taller than the player he may kneel down so they are level. Teach the player these fundamentals:

• Feet shoulder width apart, toes facing the coach, knees slightly flexed (bent), flexed at the waist. This is a basic athletic position.
• The glove should fit and not be too large or too heavy. Make sure it is open to receive the ball. (A common mistake.)
• Use these 2 rules of thumb:
  1. If the ball is above the waist, the fingers of the glove should be up. Catch the ball in the web.
  2. If the ball is below the waist, the fingers are down.
• As the ball enters the glove the player should follow the ball with his eyes. Coaches should watch closely to see if the player is ‘looking the ball’ into his glove.
• Although using 2 hands is important, don’t stress this point. There are plenty of plays that require the use of only one hand. In the initial stages pay more attention to the fact that his glove is open and that the player moves to the ball.
• The player must learn how to use his feet. If the ball is thrown to either side he must move his feet as the ball is in the air so he can get his body in front of the ball. This is very basic and very important. Whenever a player ‘reaches’ for a ball, remind him to “Move your feet.” Constant reinforcement of this skill is essential.
• On a pop fly the player should get his feet under the ball as it reaches its apex and catch the ball above and in front of his head with his glove fingers up. Play catch with your son in the back yard. Every practice should begin with throwing a catching the baseball. Keep it fun and have patience. Always use positive reinforcement.
## PITCHING MECHANICS CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stance</th>
<th>Feet slightly spread- pivot foot toes over the rubber-hands in glove on mid-line of the upper body-positive mound demeanor, ‘gunslinger look’.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rocker Step</td>
<td>Small step back (measured in inches), either to side or straight back. Head stays over posting leg foot. Weight shift allows pivot foot to move in front of rubber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pivot Foot</td>
<td>The pivot slides in front of the rubber. Do not lift the leg up too far. The foot plants in front of, not on top of the rubber and balance is on the ball of the foot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leg Lift</td>
<td>Leg lifts to the balance (gathered) position in a fluid, controlled manner. It is not a ‘swing’ but a lift by the quad muscles. (Swinging the leg creates balance problems.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance Position</td>
<td>Lift leg is knee height and foot is under the leg. Front knee is over the back knee. Do not over-rotate. Balance is entirely on the ball of the pivot foot. The head is looking directly at the target. The chin is over the belt buckle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands</td>
<td>At the balance position both hands are in the glove somewhere below the chin and above the belt buckle. This position should be consistent. The hands are on the midline of the chest and away from the body 6-10”. The elbows are not skewed out from the body but comfortably down by the side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand Break and Arm Action</td>
<td>The hands break at the exact moment that the leg starts down. The fingers are on top of the ball with the thumb underneath. The arm travels in a smooth, continuous circle and the elbow never comes to full extension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down to Landing</td>
<td>Lead with the lower body. Keep the weight back, on the post leg as long as possible. The lead leg goes down and out, not around and down. This is a gliding motion. Keep the side of the foot closed as long as possible. The back knee flexes slightly as the lead leg goes down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foot Plant (the Cocked Position)</td>
<td>The front foot lands flat-footed and is pointing at the RH batter’s box (closed about 10º) The front knee is flexed and braced (it does not move forward after landing.) The pivot foot ankle has rolled over. The upper body is still closed. The Front elbow is pointed at the catcher and both arms are shoulder-high. The fingers are on top of the ball and the ball is pointing at the shortstop. The shoulders and head are aligned. The chest is thrust out and the shoulder blades pulled back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Throwing Motion (The Power Phase)</td>
<td>The pitcher squares to the plate. The throwing arm externally rotates, the hips explode open and the pitcher pulls his glove side elbow forcibly past his hip and the glove into his chest. The throwing arm snaps to extension (fastball) and the pitcher’s head is out over his landing knee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deceleration and Follow Through</td>
<td>After ball release the throwing arm continues in a smooth, long arc outside the lead knee. The back is almost flat. Almost all of the pitcher’s weight is on the stride leg. The pitcher is ready to field his position.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Young pitchers can and should be taught good mechanics.
HOW TO THROW A BULLPEN

A bullpen session is much more than just loosening up. The pitcher should have a certain purpose in mind. He must find the release point for all his pitches, give himself a quick mental overview of his mechanics, achieve good rotation on his pitches and locate them as well. This should be done in the space of 15-20 minutes (approximately 30-45 pitches depending on age).

The pitching coach should be there to watch every pitch. He should make suggestions as to mechanics, watch the arm speed on his changeup, make sure the catcher counts the pitches and give encouragement to his pitcher.

A pitcher should always come away from a bullpen session feeling that he has accomplished something, even if he was not particularly effective. A positive attitude is important.

TIPS FOR PRE-GAME BULLPEN

• After the stretch run and throw routine begin by throwing a few pitches in front of the mound to get loose. You may then elect to throw a few pitches from behind the mound.
• Start the bullpen session by throwing at about 75%. Never begin throwing at full velocity.
• We have our pitchers throw every bullpen starting with this sequence: The catcher sets up 1 foot off the right side of the plate-pitcher throws 4 fastballs; catcher sets up 1 foot off the left side of the plate-pitcher throws 4 fastballs; catcher sets up on the inside corner-4 fastballs; outside corner- 4 fastballs. This starts the pitcher with 16 pitches, helping him locate his fastball by hitting the glove. (A pitcher’s number 1 job-‘Hit the glove.’ This helps train a pitcher to develop fastball command.) (Youth pitchers can throw 3 fastballs instead of 4.)
• Throw 3 fastballs up and in.
• Don’t practice throwing fastballs down the middle.
• Do throw all changeups down the middle. (5-10 depending on what it takes to get the feel.)
• Throw 5-6 breaking pitches. (It is recommended that youth pitchers don’t throw breaking pitches.)
• Throw an equal number of 2-seam and 4-seam fastballs. They give the hitter a slightly different look and movement. The 2-seam fastball is a very important pitch.
• Throw ½ of the session from the stretch. (Advanced Baseball)
• Visualize the ball hitting the target before you throw.
• Gradually increase the velocity until the last 10 or so pitches are thrown at full speed.
• It is important to develop a set routine that you can use for every pre-game session.
• The catcher is responsible for counting the number of pitches.

BETWEEN GAME BULLPENS

• Throw one full bullpen between starts. The full bullpen is the same as the pre-game session except stay at 50-75% velocity. Don’t air it out. (The distance may be shortened slightly.)
• Play catch and work on something every practice; mechanics, release point, arm action, etc.
• This pen is a good time to work on the ‘feel’ of the change up and breaking pitch. Since this session is not at full velocity, there is little risk of arm injury.
• The pitching coach should watch every pitcher’s bullpen, regulate his effort and give encouragement.
• The pitcher may throw this bullpen on flat ground.
# Pitch Count Chart Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Bullpen Pitches</th>
<th>Recommended Max Game Pitches</th>
<th>Recommended Max Pitches per Inning</th>
<th>Days Rest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>25-28</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>65-70</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>35-40</td>
<td>70-75</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-16</td>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>80-90</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17+</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>100+</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Tips

- The bullpen pitches do not include long toss or throws to warm up.
- Some non-competitive throwing should take place on off days.
- Use common sense with your pitchers.
- Don’t let a dominant pitcher cloud your judgement.
- We recommend that younger pitchers (under 14) not throw breaking balls.
- Keep the number of curve balls to a minimum.
- Throwing on days off should be “to tolerance.”
- Immediately stop throwing if you experience any pain.
- Think “development over winning.” Be patient.
- The number of days of rest is very important.
- Start throwing pre-game bullpens at 75% velocity. Gradually increase to 100%.
- Use common sense if the pitcher plays another position the day after pitching.
Whether at advanced or youth level, **Pitchers Fielding Practice** should be a part of pre-season baseball drills. Every play can be used; bunts, covering first, ‘comebackers’ and throwing to third.

- Place all infielders at their positions. Line up the pitchers behind the mound, each one with a baseball.
- The pitchers throw fastballs to the catcher. They attempt to throw strikes. A pitcher may get in 15 or 20 fastballs in this drill. (Can be use in lieu of a bullpen.)
- As the catcher receives the ball, the pitcher holds his ‘follow through’ until the coach hits a ground ball to the first baseman. The pitcher **sprints** to the first base bag and receives an underhand toss from the infielder. He touches the **inside** of the bag and immediately bounces off, turns and looks at the infield for any runners trying to advance.
- The infielder must stay low to and ’walk behind the ball’ when he tosses the ball to the pitcher. If he raises up, the ball will sail. The pitcher then goes to the back of the line with **his** baseball and the next pitcher steps on the mound.
- After a few rounds the pitchers field bunts down the first base line. The catcher shouts **’Step and throw!’**
- The next round is ’comebackers’ with an imaginary runner on first. The pitcher pitches to the catcher and the coach hits a ground ball to him. The pitcher turns and fires the ball to the shortstop covering second base to begin the 1-6-3 double play. If at all possible the pitcher should attempt to field the ball with his shoulder closed to second base (drop his glove-side foot back). This allows for much quicker footwork and ball release.
- The next round is bunts along the third base line and the pitcher throws to third base for a force play. The catcher directs the throw. The pitcher should be ‘over the ball’ as he picks it up. A RH pitcher must pick up the ball and pivot to get in position to make the throw. A LH pitcher simply picks it up and throws. (Use this play only if the pitcher can get to the ball very quickly. Otherwise throw to first.)

**Tips:**

- If the pitchers pick up a bunted ball with their bare hand, look to see that they do not put the ball back in the glove. This takes too much time.
- Sometimes during this drill a pitcher will ‘cheat’ by leaving too early. If he leaves to cover first too early hit a ground ball back up the middle (behind him) to keep him honest. Have them hole that “follow through.”
- Pitchers may ‘shadow throw’ when they have thrown too much.
- As a pitcher covers first he may have a tendency to step on the middle of the bag or actually cross over it into foul territory. A base runner can run up his back creating the possibility of injury. Make sure he touches the **inside** of the bag with his right foot and immediately gets out of the way.
- The pitcher is responsible for retrieving his ball after each play. (Drill Time: 30min)
STANDARD DEFENSIVE POSITIONING

Standard Defensive Positioning recognizes the fact that there are more balls hit up the middle than in the holes. This configuration allows for the best possible defensive range. In certain situations and with certain hitters the coach may elect to alter his defense slightly. There are certain responsibilities that go with this defense. The middle infielders must be able the make the backhand play, the third baseman must be able to play the bunt and the slow roller and the first baseman must be agile and quick.

FIRST BASE- Play 7 full steps off the line and 6 or 7 full steps back. This positioning gives him the best possible range and still allows him to get to the bag in time. In a situation later in the game that requires him to cut down on the possibility of a double he will play closer to the line. With a runner on first base, he will hold him on. With runners on first and second or bases loaded, he may play back unless the runner takes too large a lead or he wants to keep the double play in order.

SECOND BASE- Play 9 full steps over and 9 steps back. In a double play situation he should pinch in a little (4 steps over and 4 back). In a double play situation with a left-hand pull hitter at bat play 7 steps over and 7 back.

SHORTSTOP- Play 9 full steps over and 9 back. Double play situations are 4-7 over and 4-7 back.

THIRD BASE- Play 6 full steps over and 5-8 back. In the late innings or if a right hand pull hitter is at bat he may play closer to the line. With hitters who run well he may play even with the bag. As the count eliminates the bunt possibility he may move back.

CENTER FIELD- Play a few steps either left or right of second base depending on the hitter. Do not let the alignment of second base and the pitcher block your view of the strike zone.

LEFT FIELD- Extend an imaginary line from first base through second and into the middle of the outfield. Have him take 8 full steps to his right. That is the normal position.

RIGHT FIELD- Extend the imaginary line from third base through second and into the outfield. Have him take 8 full steps to his left.
Tips:

- With 2 outs the outfield may play deeper to cut down on the possibility of a double.
- In order to quickly react to the bunt, the infielders should learn to ‘read the barrel of the bat.’
- Pitchers must cover first on all ground balls hit to the right side of the infield. They must sprint to the bag.
- With a runner on third the team may elect to play the infield in. Play a few steps on the clay behind the grass rather than on the grass. The infielder must come forward anyway to field the ball and this gives a step or 2 more range.
- Winning teams are strong ‘up the middle’- catcher, pitcher, second baseman, shortstop and center fielder. This is not by accident. Position the defense so your players can make the play ‘up the middle.’
- Never, never hold a runner on at third. Where is he going? Don’t hold a runner on second either. There are techniques for keeping a runner close at second.

YOUTH LEAGUE

FIRST BASE- Play 4-5 steps over and 5 steps back.
SECOND BASE- Play 6 steps over and 6 full steps back. Runner on first- 4 over and 4 back. (Double play)
SHORTSTOP- Play 6 steps over and 6 back. Man of first- 4 over and 4 back. (Double play)
THIRD BASE- Play 4 over and 4-5 back. Bunt situation-even with the bag.
CENTER FIELD- Play a few steps either left or right of second base depending on the hitter. Do not let the pitcher block your view of the strike zone by playing directly behind the bag.
LEFT FIELD- Extend an imaginary line from first base through second and into the middle of the outfield. Now have him take 5 steps to his right. That is the normal position.
RIGHT FIELD- Extend the imaginary line from third base through second and into the middle of the outfield. Have him take 5 steps to his left

(Except in obvious bunting situations, play those corners back. Teams are not going to beat you with surprise bunts. The whole idea of Standard Defensive Positioning is to give your defense more range-the ability to make more plays routinely.)
DEFENSIVE DRILLS
This drill should be practiced in the pre-season. It not only gives the outfielders fly ball work but also teaches the vital skill of communication.

Line the outfielders into 2 groups- center and right field. Hit fly ball fungos in the gap. As the outfielders sprint to the ball they call to each other: one says loudly “Got it, got it” We don’t have the off fielder say ‘take it’ because it may break the other fielder’s concentration. The players then go to the back of the opposite line. The center fielder has priority over the other fielders. If he calls for the ball the other player should back off and back him up. (A pitching machine may be used for this drill. It may give the players more chances in a shorter period of time. )

Then the coach adds his infielders and hits fly balls to the areas where either the infielder or outfielder can make the catch. The outfielder has priority over the infielder because he is coming in and has a better view. But the infielder should try to make the catch until called off.

During this drill the catchers can do blocking drills or the pitchers can be throwing a bullpen.

The off-fielder should not take his eyes off the ball to look at the other fielder. He should concentrate on the baseball. (Drill time: 15+ min)
THE NINE-SKILL THROWING TO BASES DRILL

This drill is excellent for developing arm strength and employing outfield skills along with throwing accuracy and fielding. Line the players in right field. The coach hits a ground ball fungo to the left of the first player, near the foul line. He must hustle to the ball, quickly get into position, field it on the move and come up throwing. He throws to second base without a cutoff. He should throw on a line and not with an arc. It is OK for the ball to bounce a few times. As the season progresses the player will begin to see his arm grow stronger. The player then goes to the back of the line. Hit fungos to each player twice in each round. After the first player in line fields his second ball he starts a new line in center field. Eventually everyone lines up behind him. The second round is fly balls in the gap and throws to third base. The third round is in left field. Hit ground balls toward the left field foul line and have the players throw into second base. The fourth round is in left field and the players throw home. The coach hits routine ground balls to the players who are lined up in medium left field. You need a good fungo coach.

TIPS:
• Reinforce good technique during this drill. Use the ‘right over might’ principle. Don’t let the players throw the ball with a large arc. Have them throw on a line. They will eventually become stronger.
• Place a coach in the outfield to teach technique.
• The ideal throw to the plate is on a line and reaches the catcher on one hop. For many young players the ball will take several bounces. That is normal and it gives the coach a way to monitor his progress.
• Use everybody in this drill except 2 infielders and a catcher. Rotate the infielders to the outfield. Limit the number of throws and don’t use this drill more than twice a week. If you have a pitcher who threw the day before, he may stand beside the coach and feed him baseballs.
• If you station a cutoff man, he must let the balls go through and only field balls that are off-line.
• The infielders and catchers work hard on receiving the ball and simulating tags.
• It is important for the infielders to catch or block every ball thrown to them. They do not want to let the ball get by them.
• This drill allows the coach many teaching opportunities and involves nine skills. (Drill Time: 15 min)
THE NINE SKILLS

Are the simple things often the best? Are drills that teach a multitude of skills valuable? You bet. Use this drill once or twice a week in the pre-season and as needed during the season. Everybody is in the outfield except 2 infielders and 1 catcher. This drill teaches and reinforces:

1. Outfielders Fielding ground balls on the run. (A specific technique)
2. Cutting off ground balls. (Preventing them from getting by the outfielder)
3. Develops arm strength (Throwing to bases without cutoffs, {coach can monitor improvement}) Let the ball travel all the way into the base, even if it takes several hops.
4. Develops Throwing accuracy
5. Learning how to find and throw with the 4-seam grip on the run.
6. Develops good throwing technique (throwing the ball on a line without a large arc.)
7. Teaches infielders to field incoming balls of various hops. (Important not to let the ball get by them.)
8. Teaches infielders to make tags.
9. Teaches catchers to make plays at the plate.

Round 1: line players in medium-right field. Hit ground ball fungos to their left with sufficient force to make them sprint to cut the balls off. 2 balls each.
Round 2: line players in center field. Hit ground balls to their right in the gap. The throw is into third base.
Round 3: right field. Hit ground balls to their right, toward the left field foul line. The throw is into second.
Round 4: right field. Players field ground balls on the run and throw to the plate.

(2 balls for each player in each round. After first player fields his second ball, he starts the next line. Fast-paced, high energy drill. Coach can add cutoffs but don’t cut the ball off unless it is way off line. Allowing the ball to travel the distance develops arm strength.

Another by-product of this drill is that it teaches outfielders to get rid of the ball quickly and not to hold it.
Infield and outfield fungos are one of the game’s most important drills. This skill should be practiced every day in some form (usually during batting practice). This drill not only develops fielding and throwing skills it has the added benefit of increasing arm strength. It is a good pre-season evaluation drill.

**Infield:** Line the infielders outside the foul line with one player at third base. Hit a routine ground ball to him. He fields the ball and throws across to first base and then goes to the back of the line. The next player immediately takes his place and assumes the ‘ready’ position. Hit fungos to each player in this sequence: 2 routine ground balls, 2 balls to their left, 2 balls to their backhand side, 2 slow rollers. The players then move to the shortstop position and the same sequence is hit to them. Lastly they move to second base and perform the same routine. (Don’t neglect your first baseman.)

**Outfield:** Another coach hits ground ball and fly ball fungos to the outfielders lined up medium-deep in the outfield. Hit 2 ground balls to each player’s right and then their left. Hit 4-5 **HIGH** fly balls with varying degrees of difficulty. Have them throw the ball all the way into the coach. He may elect to use a cutoff if he wants to work on that skill. The cut-off also may be used to rest the outfielders’ arms.

**Tips:**
- Use this drill early in the season to evaluate your players.
- Infielders should take ground balls every day. On most days they may take them during batting practice in lieu of this drill.
- Occasionally the head coach may walk about halfway down the right field foul line and watch this drill from there. It gives him a very good overall view of the infielders’ skill level; arm strength, fielding ability and footwork.
- It is necessary to have a competent fungo hitter. Hit routine ground balls. Don’t hit them too hard. You want the players to work on technique.
- As the infielder fields the ball, look at the brim of his cap. It should be pointing **down**. If not, he is not seeing the ball all the way into his glove.
- Have the players ‘move through the ball’ as they field it. They should always keep their feet moving.
- On slow rollers the player should field the ball in front of his left foot. Practice the backhand play every day. (Drill time: 20-30 min)
Routine not hard, ground ball directly at the infielder.

Routine not hard, ground ball to the infielder’s left.

Routine not hard, ground ball to his backhand side.

Slow roller should be fielded in front of left foot.
QUARTERBACKS

This drill not only is great for fly ball skill work but also is an excellent conditioning drill.

- Players line up on one foul line and the coach in the middle of the outfield.
- Each player has a baseball.
- On “Go” the first player jogs to the outfield side of the coach. As he approaches the coach he tosses him his baseball and sprints toward the opposite foul line.
- The coach calls ‘ball’ and the player looks over his throwing shoulder.
- The coach leads the player with a long, high ‘pass’ and the player runs under it and catches it.
- As soon as the first player tosses the ball to the coach, the next player in line starts toward the coach.
- Repeat the sequence until all the players are on the opposite foul line. Then have them start back.
- The coach may elect to occasionally throw the ball to the players’ glove side. The player looks over his throwing shoulder and determines that the ball is on his other side. Without breaking stride or getting turned around, he turns his head (head only, not his body) the other way and makes a backhand catch. This is an important skill for players to learn. The tendency is to get turned around, making the play impossible.
- The players must run full speed after they have tossed their ball to the coach.
- The coach may run this 5-10 times back and forth.

Tips:
- Position a coach at each foul line and make sure the players leave on time in order to keep the drill flowing smoothly.
- Teach players to run through the ball and not give up on it.
- Encourage players to ‘lay out’ for the ball.
- After tossing the ball to the coach make sure they sprint toward the foul line. It is important that they learn to catch the ball running at full speed. A twist can be added to this drill. They must go one time through without any one dropping a ball in order to quit the drill. (Drill Time: 10 min)
RUNDOWNS

The player who gets into a rundown has made an offensive mistake. The defense should take the attitude that they will get the out every time. Here are some tips for completing a successful rundown.

- If a runner is caught too far off a base, the pitcher or infielder with the ball should run directly at the runner until he commits to a base. Sometimes the runner will freeze or hesitate too long and the player with the ball can run him down without a throw. This is the best-case scenario.
- The player with the ball should hold it head high and in the proper throwing position. He should not make faking motions with the ball because he might deceive his own teammate.
- When a player throws the ball he should toss it to his teammate’s glove side. The players should be on the same side so they don’t have to throw over the runner.
- The player with the ball should run full speed at the base runner until the base runner makes a definite commitment to the next base. The infielder without the ball should begin to immediately “close” on the runner. (Failure to ‘close’ is a very common mistake.)
- When the runner has reached “commitment” speed, the player with the ball tosses it to his teammate. This teammate then makes the tag.
- Keep in mind that if the runner runs into a player without the ball, he is awarded the next base. Some coaches teach this to their base runners so you have to be aware of it.
- The timing of the rundown play is critical and the coach should focus on that aspect. The player with the ball must throw at the right time and the other infielder must have “closed” enough so he can run the base runner down and make the tag.
- Always strive to make this play with only one throw.
- It is usually necessary for the players to catch the ball and make the tag with one hand on this play.
- Players have to learn to catch the ball and make the tag on the run.

Unsuccessful rundowns usually occur when the player throws the ball too soon, too late or the other player has not closed on the runner. (Drill Time: 15-20 min)
RELAY RACE

This relay drill looks easy at first glance but is very difficult to do correctly. The two players on the foul line have a baseball. The players are spaced approximately 60-90 feet apart. (You may want to start them at 60’ and gradually increase the distance) On “Go” they throw to the next player in line and he in turn throws to the next player, etc. The “race” is down and back. The coach may elect to do this 2 or 3 times in a row. You may make this a contest where the loser has to pay some small penalty. The competition is fun and it increases performance.

Tips:
- All players on the team should participate.
- The player preparing to receive the ball should have his hands up in a ‘goal post’ position.
- Players should throw the ball to the glove side.
- As the ball is in the air the player turns his body so his glove side is facing the next player in line. He takes a few small steps toward his target catches the ball while he is moving and quickly throws. It is important for the player to turn his body before the ball arrives. It takes too much time to catch the ball while facing it, then turn, and throw.
- Players should throw the ball hard and on a line.
COMMON FAULTS AT THE CATCHING POSITION

Over the past two years we have devoted a section in every Baseball Excellence Monthly Newsletter to catching. We want to emphasize how important that position is and how small flaws in mechanics can negatively affect the outcome of a game. A mistake-prone catcher is like a poor quarterback on a football team. You are not going to win many games, the games won’t go smoothly, and you or your players won’t have much fun.

Poor catching can make a game look pretty ugly. The pitcher doesn’t get the borderline strikes, there are too many passed balls, base runners steal at will and the defense deteriorates and self-destructs. Whenever there is a lot of movement on the base paths the defense is put under pressure and mistakes frequently occur. A competent catcher can put a stop to much of that folly.

I like a game where the pitcher works fast and throws strikes, the hitters swing the bats, the defense makes the routine plays and the game moves along at a brisk pace. In fact, that is the heart of coaching baseball. A coach aspires to get his players to the level where competent play is the norm rather than the exception. And it all starts with a skilled pitcher and catcher.

Throwing To Bases

The most common mistakes are with the feet. Look at the feet first. Here are the most serious transgressions a catcher makes when he throws to a base:

• **He crow hops.** A catcher doesn’t have time to take those extra steps. By the time a catcher has taken a crow hop, a runner at full speed has taken 4-6 strides. If a coach will just put a stop to that unnecessary movement he will give his catcher much more of an advantage. The crow hop is very common in youth catchers.

• When he executes a jump pivot, he **jumps back.** This movement takes him further away from the base he is throwing to.

The drill here is to draw lines in the clay behind his heels when his feet are in the receiving position. Watch them as he executes a jump pivot. If the right foot moves behind the position of the left heel he has made an unnecessary movement. The ‘teach’ is to tell the catcher to “change places with your feet.” His left foot should land in the spot where his right foot originally was.

• **He jumps ‘around the corner’.** His feet move back and too far to his left. It is actually as if he has jumped around the corner of a building. Again, “change places with your feet.”

• **He does not close off his back foot properly.** If he is throwing to second base, his right anklebone should be pointing at the bag, not somewhere between third base and the shortstop.

• **He steps open with this left foot.** (He steps toward the shortstop instead of second base.) This will pull his front shoulder off direction to the base. Throws will often be to the shortstop side of second base. Let’s don’t forget the upper body. There are plenty of mistakes made here also:

• **His front shoulder flies open.** One reason may be the front foot we mentioned earlier. A more common reason is that in an effort to throw hard, the catcher starts the throwing motion prematurely before his front foot lands.

• **He drops his elbow** when he throws. There is that dreaded ‘low elbow’ again. Often this is an error in timing or the distance is too challenging. You will often see the ball ‘sail’ high and away as it approaches second base.
• His **arm path** is too long. Instead of straight back, he goes down, back and up. A catcher must ‘short-arm’ his throwing motion. This is one reason why pitchers should not be catchers. This category also includes faulty arm action. We promise we won’t go into that again but they are plentiful among young catchers. You won’t see too many at higher levels of play because by that time faulty arm action has forced young players out of the game.

• He doesn’t **close off** his front side. He never adequately closes off his front side to second base. The way to teach good technique is to have the catcher bring glove, throwing hand and ball straight back to the back shoulder together. He then continues with his throwing arm to the cocked position while the front elbow is pointing at the base. This helps his front shoulder stay closed.

• He doesn’t have a **4-seam grip** on the baseball. This takes practice. By the time he catches the ball to the time he is in the cocked position he must have a 4-seam grip. Otherwise he may throw a slider to the base.

• He **slips** on home plate. This is embarrassing. Teach the jump pivot for inside pitches and the jab step for outside pitches. This will help keep the catcher’s feet away from the plate.

### Plays At The Plate

• The biggest mistake here is that the catcher doesn’t close off his left leg to the runner. He exposes the side of his leg and leaves himself open to a serious knee injury.

• The catcher doesn’t get low enough.

• Poor positioning in relation to the foul line.

### Receiving The Ball

Let’s review a few common receiving errors:

• Instead of **holding** the pitch firmly the catcher lets it travel into his body. This action impedes the umpire’s view of the baseball and takes the ball out of the strike zone.

• He pushes a **low pitch** into the ground, taking away a possible strike. He must learn to ‘stick it.’

• He constantly is guilty of **too many passed balls**. This may be partially due to a young catcher’s inability to anticipate the path of the pitch. There is also the possibility he may be in the wrong position. Catching is hard and it requires a very athletic player.

• Receiving the **high pitch incorrectly**. The catcher must learn to get his glove above the high pitch. Many times poor technique will cause the ball to ‘tick’ off the top of his glove.

• **Hard hands** is the opposite of ‘soft hands.’ It is the inability to receive the ball correctly. The catcher may stab at the ball or it may often bounce out of his glove. If correct technique has been taught this may just be lack of athletic ability.

### Blocking Balls in the Dirt

• One of the most common faults among young catchers is trying to **short hop or catch** a ball in the dirt instead of trying to block it. This requires constant verbal reinforcement and hours of blocking drills.

• After a catcher blocks the ball he doesn’t **hustle** after it and allows the runner to advance.

• He fails to get in the **proper catching position** with runners on base (or with 2 strikes). He must unlock his hips and raise his haunches to make it easier to drop down to block the ball in the dirt. (Very common mistake)

The catcher must learn to:

1. Get to his knees very quickly. He might think of “exploding down.”

2. Bend over the ball and absorb it with his body. His upper body should “roll over” the ball. In this manner he can gain a measure of control of the ball.

3. Practice these techniques as “shadow drills.” He may do them at home.
CATCHER DRILLS

Balls to the mask. Reduces fear of being hit in the face with the ball.

No hands blocking drill. Round shoulders and absorb ball with body.

Routine blocking drill. Keep right hand behind glove.

Drill blocking with a hitter in the box. Catchers don’t like getting under the bat.

Notice how he pushes off with his right foot to get into position.

Catcher then executes the block, using good technique.

Foul pop-ups. Derek hits high foul fly ball.

Catcher finds ball and holds mask.

He throws mask away from direction of the ball and keeps his back to the infield with his hands over his head.

Conditioning Drill-
3 sets of 10 (Don’t use your hands to provide impetus.)

Catcher jumps from side to side maintaining good form.

The coach challenges the catcher to make the jumps as quickly as possible.

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OFFENSE
BATTING PRACTICE

This professional-style batting practice is designed to give the players the most possible swings in one practice. It is also arranged so that infielders and outfielders get a lot of ground ball and fly ball fungos. There are numerous activities occurring at one time so the players and coaches have to stay alert. Emphasis should be placed on safety. Use common sense. Use screens at the mound, in front of first base, at second and in center field. The use of a portable batting cage is recommended. Instruct players before the first batting practice. This should be a high-energy practice. Everyone has a job to do and everyone should hustle. If conducted properly a lot of teaching can get done, 12-14 players can get 100+ swings (including tee, dry swings and soft toss) and the infielders can get 30+ ground balls. This practice utilizes stations and keeps everyone occupied. No one is standing around without a job to do. Players have fun and get a tremendous amount of baseball out of one hour.

Two coaches are necessary. Three are better.

Youth league players can run this practice without screens. The fungo hitters may be slightly at risk but we haven’t been hit with a foul ball in 10 years.
TIPS

- Divide the players into groups; eg. 12 players, 3 groups of 4.
- It’s a good idea to put the best hitters in the first group. They can ‘show the way’ and help give the younger players incentive to improve.
- First group hits, 2nd group-outfield, 3rd group- take infield fungos. (If batting cages are available, create another group.)
- Hitting group: 1st player hits, 2nd player hits off tee, 3rd player takes soft toss, 4th player warm-up swings and responsible for foul balls over the screen. He can work on his hitting mechanics and take overload-under load swings. The soft toss hitter is next in line to hit.
- Example of hitting rounds: 1st round-2 bunts, 1 hit-and-run, 10 swings. 2nd round: 2 bunts, 1 hit-and-run 6 swings. 3rd round: 6 swings. 4th round: 3 swings. (a swing and a miss is considered a swing)
- The reason for bunting first is that bunting requires concentration and the player watches the ball hit the bat. It prepares him for hitting in addition to reinforcing bunting technique.
- On next to last pitch, pitching coach calls “Coming out.” After the next swing, the hitter exits to his right and another hitter immediately steps into the batter’s box or portable cage from the left.
- First baseman and shortstop take ground ball fungos from the 3rd base fungo coach. Second and third basemen take groundballs from the 1st base fungo coach. Fungos are hit in this manner to give game-like angles to ground balls.
- Infielders throw the fungo ball back to the coach with an arc so it lands on one hop. This is a skill and it must be learned. There aren’t enough coaches to help catch. They are needed elsewhere. This also reduces stress on players’ arms.
- Infielders take fungos from the coach only. All balls hit by the batter are let go through the infield and fielded by the outfielders.
- Fungos are timed after pitched ball is hit so as to not to have 2 balls hit to an infielder at the same time. The fungo coach should pay close attention to this.
- Outfielders break on all fly balls, retrieve and throw to bagman. Coach should be alert for teaching opportunities in the outfield. All outfield balls are thrown into the bagman.
- Outfielders should be working on their throwing accuracy to the bagman and learning to “break” on fly balls. Pitchers shagging in the outfield can work on mechanics by shadow pitching.
- Coaches should be aware that some players will have a tendency to cluster in the outfield. That is counterproductive and the group should be broken up. Station outfielders to all fields.
- When next to last hitter is on his last round the coach calls “Next group.” They RUN to the outfield foul line (to avoid getting hit by baseballs) and to their stations.
- When the pitching coach’s bucket gets low he calls “Balls in” and the bagman RUNS the balls into him taking care not to get hit by a batted ball.
- When bucket is empty the pitching coach has EVERYONE in the hitting group quickly pick up balls.
- Higher levels require screens and a portable batting cage.
- Keep the practice running at an urgent pace. The more swings and fungos the players get, the better.
- Station 2 outfielders along both foul lines. If a big hitter is at bat, position a player outside the fence to retrieve home run balls.
# HITTING CHECKLIST

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<th>COMMON FAULTS</th>
<th>DRILLS</th>
<th>CHECKPOINTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Not Seeing the Ball</td>
<td>1. 2 players without bats, coach pitches, players call out ball or strike. 2. Players describe to the coach the rotation on the ball. 2. Players tell coach what the pitch is (FB, CB, CH) before it arrives.</td>
<td>Look at the player’s head. It should be still. If the hitter is consistently late, not seeing the ball all the way, may be the problem. Teach them to see the ball out of the pitcher’s hand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dropping the Hands</td>
<td>1. Lots of tee work with the tee set at its highest point 2. Hundreds of dry swings under supervision 3. Daily positive verbal reinforcement. 4. Develop a pre-swing rhythm. 5. Top hand drill.</td>
<td>The hands go back or back and up, not back and down. It should look like he is throwing the bat at the ball with a slight downward angle.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over Striding</td>
<td>1. The stride box. That is what it is for. 2. Place the hitter’s cap, or a towel, 10-12 inches in front of his front foot. 3. Draw a line in the clay. 4. Hundreds of dry swings under supervision. 5. Daily verbal reinforcement.</td>
<td>Check his stance. Look for the ‘power position’ after his foot lands. Look at his balance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stepping in the Bucket (Striding away from the plate.)</td>
<td>1. The stride box. 2. Place a 2x4 behind the hitter’s front foot. 3. Place the hitter’s cap or towel behind his front foot. 4. Place a couple of bats behind the hitter’s front foot. 5. Hundreds of dry swings at practice and at home. 6. Actually throw the bat at the pitcher’s mound. 7. Daily positive verbal reinforcement.</td>
<td>Make sure his front toe is slightly closed. He should step at the pitcher or slightly towards the direction of the plate (approx. 45º). The fear factor may be involved here and the coach must exercise patience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Back Foot Rotation</td>
<td>1. Have the hitter assume the ‘power position’ with a baseball in his hand instead of a bat. Throw the ball into a screen. You will notice his back foot rotates. Immediately give him a bat and let him swing. 2. Put a bat behind his back in the bend of his elbows and have him stride and ‘swing.’ 3. Daily verbal reinforcement.</td>
<td>Look at back foot only. Check for over rotation. Also look at the knee flexion. Some players ‘squat’ when they hit. This is our ‘teach’ for the stance: front toe out slightly. Back heel out slightly.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## COACHING TIPS

- The tee is the best tool you have. Use it everyday.
- If a player is extending his arms too early, use the ‘fence drill.’ Place the hitter about 3 feet in front of a wire fence. Have him stride and swing. If he is extending his arms prematurely, his bat will hit the fence, giving him instant feedback.
- Make sure your hitters are balanced after the swing as well as before.
- Constantly talk hitting with your players. Teach them to be aggressive.
- Teach them to swing the bat hard. “Throw the bat at the ball.” (Without letting go of it.)
- Use wood bats to develop quick hands. **Quick hands.** All good hitters have great bat speed.
- A full-length mirror is good to have at practice so the players can get feedback with dry swings.
- When evaluating a hitter, look at his feet and then at his hand action.
- Look at his head; is it still as he strides or does it move significantly forward?
THE THREE-MAN DRILL

This drill accomplishes several objectives. It allows one or two coaches to instruct three players at one time as they each work on their different skills. It involves a hitter, catcher and pitcher only. And it is a ‘live’ drill. The hitter is trying to hit, the pitcher is trying to get him out and the catcher is working on his game. Three players only are on the field playing a simulated game. One coach sets up behind the portable batting cage and the pitching coach is behind a screen on the outfield side of the pitching mound. The other players can be working on drills on another field or in the batting cages or shagging balls. A hitter is on deck and another pitcher and catcher is warming up in the bullpen, waiting their turn. A lot of teaching can get done with this drill. The isolation allows opportunities for very meaningful instruction. A coach can spend as much time as 1 - 3 simulated innings with each trio. (He should keep a pitch count.) He can give his entire pitching staff game-like conditions in one practice session and he can give his hitters a significant workout. You will find that in these sessions, the hitters will not always be as successful as in batting practice. They should understand that. The pitcher is trying to get them out. This drill has terrific mental as well as physical applications and comes under the category of making good use of time.

Tips:
• Occasionally give situations to the hitter: runner on third no outs, bunt situation, etc.
• The pitching coach can get a good view of the pitcher’s arm action, direction and balance under game-like conditions. It is a good time to work with him on his mechanics.
• Give positive verbal instruction.
• If necessary, one coach can run this drill.
• Because this drill uses game-like conditions, the teaching applications can really help a player with his progress. (Drill Time: 1+ hour)
**SACRIFICE BUNT CHECKLIST**

The pivot method is superior to the “square around” method. The position is easier to assume the bunter has more mobility and better coverage of the strike zone without putting his body in harm’s way.

The batter must understand that he is there to sacrifice his turn at bat so that he may advance the runner. “Show” bunt early.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORRECT</th>
<th>COMMON MISTAKES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The toes of both feet are pointing at the pitcher with back foot slightly closer to the plate than the front. He assumes a balanced athletic posture. His backside is under his shoulders.</td>
<td>The feet are not placed properly and the bunter is not in an athletic position. His body is leaning too far forward.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The bunter holds the bat relatively level and at the top of the strike zone and has coverage of the plate. He has both hands up on the bat.</td>
<td>He holds the bat too low and the bat head is not level but in a downward position.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The bunter lowers his body to bunt a low pitch. He does not move the bat up or down but moves his body by bending his knees.</td>
<td>The bunter drops the bat head to attempt to bunt a low pitch. This will invariably cause the ball to be popped up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bunter allows the ball to arrive over the plate and simply lets the ball hit the bat.</td>
<td>The bunter reaches out for the ball. This will cause the ball to be struck too hard, possibly negating the desired effect of a bunt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For an outside pitch the bunter bunts down the first base line by pointing the knob of the bat at third base. The inside pitch is bunted by pointing the bat head at first base.</td>
<td>The bunter bunts back at the pitcher negating the desired result of a bunt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bunter bunts <strong>strikes only</strong>. He understands that a base on balls moves the runner over also.</td>
<td>The bunter offers at pitches outside the strike zone.</td>
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</table>
SITUATIONAL BATTLING PRACTICE

Practice this drill at least twice a week after an abbreviated batting practice. It is very important because it practices the ways teams score runs. The use of a runner also allows coaches to teach the important skill of base running.

This drill involves 3 players- a base runner, a hitter and a hitter on deck. A coach should be with the hitter and a coach should be with the runner. Other players can be shagging in the outfield and hitting in the cages.

1. Hitter places two sacrifice bunts. Base runner at first base ‘breaks’ (3 or 4 steps) on each play but does not advance. It is important that the coach sees that the runner understands leads and when to break.

2. Hit-and-run. Runner breaks and runs all the way to third base. Hitter attempts to hit ball on the ground. If the ball is hit in the air, the runner recognizes it but continues to third anyway. (To make the drill move along at a practical pace.)

3. On third the coach gives the squeeze bunt sign. The hitter acknowledges that it is a squeeze. The runner sprints for home at the appropriate time and the hitter bunts the ball on the ground. The runner continues behind the cage and the hitter bunts a pitch for a base hit (while the runner is returning to first base.)

4. When the runner is back on first base the hitter bunts one sacrifice bunt.

5. Hit-and-run. The runner this time stops at second base.

6. The hitter then attempts to hit behind the runner to advance him. The runner sprints to third base.

7. The hitter gets five “get in” swings. His efforts are concentrated on hitting the ball on the ground into the middle of the infield and hitting fly balls deep enough to score the runner. The runner “reads” all five balls and breaks on each one. He does not go home on each one, merely breaks so that the coach can see that he knows the correct technique and understands the situations.

The base runner then takes his turn in the batter’s box and the hitter becomes the runner.

When it is time for the base runner to advance he does so even if the hitter is not successful. This keeps everything moving and allows all players to hit, and run the bases in one session.

Youth teams can perform similar situational hitting without the hit-and-run. They can bunt runners over and hit behind them to move them over. Instead of the squeeze bunt they can execute a “contact play” where the hitter bunts the ball down the first base line and the runner scores from third. The important thing is to teach them how to be good situational hitters.
TEACHING BASE RUNNING

Line the players outside the first base line. Go through the base running techniques for each base and have them each perform the skills.

First base- Take a primary lead. *(Lead off in a straight line from the front corner of the bag because it gives the pitcher the illusion that the runner is closer to the base than he actually is.) As the pitcher comes set, take the last 2 deliberate shuffle steps. This can have a distracting effect on a young pitcher. The primary lead gives the runner approximately a 15-foot lead. With a left-hand pitcher he may elect to take a shorter lead, 3 shuffle steps only. (One-way lead.) As the pitcher delivers the pitch the runner takes his secondary lead. * The runner’s chest is facing the catcher and the runner keeps his eyes on the pitcher’s back foot. (If the back heel raises he is throwing over.)

Second Base- starting with the right foot, take 3 steps off the base in a straight line toward 3rd. As the pitcher comes set take 2 deliberate shuffle steps. As the pitcher delivers the ball to the plate the base runner takes his secondary lead. (Can be up to 20’, third base coach gives directions) The runner should keep his eyes on the pitcher only.

2 out lead at Second Base- same as primary lead at 1st and 2nd but 12’ behind the bag. The 12’ arc is now established and provides an angle for sharp turns at 3rd base. He should go at the ‘crack of the bat.’

Third Base- Lead off in foul territory, return to the base in fair. The lead is as far as the third baseman is away from the bag. From your primary lead, if the pitcher is pitching from the stretch, take a 3 step walking lead, timed so that your right foot lands at the moment the ball crosses the plate. If the pitcher is pitching from the windup, take a 5 step walking lead. This is an advantage because your lead has taken you 25-28 feet from third base.

*Primary Lead- With the left foot on the base take 3 full steps beginning with the right foot. R-L-R. Stop. When the pitcher comes set, take 2 steps. Shuffle, shuffle. R-L, R-L stop.

*Secondary Lead- As the pitcher delivers to the plate take 3 skip hops, leading with the right foot. Read the pitch- hits the catcher’s glove or is hit. If it is hit read the angle of the ball off the bat, down or up.

(Drill Time: Whatever time it takes. This is a vital skill.)
YOUTH LEAGUE

Have the players kneel on the grass in front of home plate. Go through the base running techniques and move them around the bases as you teach. Then have them perform the skills.

**Home to first**- when contact is made, immediately drop the bat and push off with the rear foot directly towards first base. Look straight ahead, not where the ball was hit. Run with the head up. At the runner’s box (about half way) take a quick look at the infield to see if the ball went through. (Don’t break stride.) If there is to be a play at first, touch the front of the bag. Run full speed through the base, break down and look right. (Look right to see if there is an overthrow.) If the ball goes through, make an 8-foot arc approaching the base, lean, and push off the inside corner of the base with either foot. As you round the base, still at full speed make the determination whether to advance or retreat back to the bag.

**First to second**- determine the number of outs, the situation, look for a sign from the coach and find the outfielders. Remain on the base until the ball crosses the plate. Take 2 shuffle steps while facing the plate. If the ball is hit on the ground, take a crossover step and run full speed to second. If a fly ball is hit to the outﬁeld, go halfway to see if it is caught. If the ball is caught, run full speed back to first. On a base hit to the outﬁeld take an 8 foot arc and approach second base the same way as at first, leaning and pushing off the inside of the bag. As you make that arc pick up the third base coach and look for a signal.

**Second to third**- look at the coach for a sign, recognize the number of outs, and find the outfielders. If a ground ball is hit to the runner’s right and he is not forced, make sure he doesn’t run into an out by the shortstop or third baseman. If there is a runner on first he must run on a ground ball. On fly balls to the outfield go halfway. On ground balls to the right side sprint to third. On base hits to the outfield think ‘score’ and pick up the coach at third base.

**Third to home**- pick up sign. Lead off in foul territory and return in fair. On every pitch the runner should take at least 2 shuffle steps off the base. He can advance as far down the line as the third baseman is away from the bag. On any fly ball he should immediately return to the bag and tag up (It is common for young players to not hustle back to the bag.) On any ground ball to the middle infielders if they are at normal depth, he may score. If the infield is in, wait for the ball to go through. Read the ball in the dirt and make the decision whether or not to go on a passed ball.

BASE RUNNING AND CONDITIONING

Use this drill for teaching as well as conditioning purposes.

- Players line up in the right hand batter’s box.
- On “Go” the first player runs from home to first. As he reaches the runner’s box (1/2 way) the next player runs.
- Teach good technique: run with head up, quick look to infield at runner’s box, hit front of bag, break down and look right.
- Run the players from home to first 4 times. They walk back in foul territory to get in line.
- The next series is home to second.
- As the base runner nears the bag he runs out away from the baseline hits the corner with either foot and pushes off toward second base.
- Run the players from home to second 4 times. They walk back through the middle of the infield.
- The next series is first to third. Run the players 4 times from first to third.
- The last series is circling the bases- twice.
- Players should run at full speed at all times.
- As they run, have a coach at each base to monitor technique.
- Run this drill the last thing at practice. (Drill Time: 10 min)
This section is a Strength and Conditioning regimen that Derek Lilliquist has designed for a local high school. It is used in the off-season to establish a strength base for the spring baseball season. This is not a “How-to lift weights” book but rather an outline and a guide to give the coach an idea of how to conduct strength training.

It is very important that players use correct weight lifting techniques. They should only attempt these drills with a trained strength coach or personal trainer.

Baseball is becoming a specialized sport in which weight training has become an essential element. Athletes are training younger for baseball and they are also playing the game year round. In Florida we play our High School season and take 2 weeks off. Then we go on to American Legion and play a 40-50 game schedule. After 2 weeks off we start our fall-winter conditioning program. This consists of lifting weights Monday, Wednesday and Friday. On Tuesday and Thursday we do a cardiovascular and abdominal workout and then we go to the field. We concentrate on defensive and offensive drills from 3pm–4pm and then sometimes play a 7-9-inning game. We force the kids to play through normal stiffness from the weight room. As long as we offer advice as to biomechanical motions, and the fact we know our kids, they are able to lift weights and play games with very positive results. We do not want the kids to make mechanical corrections from stiffness. We want them to make adjustments because they are right. The body tends to find the motion that doesn’t aggravate the stiff or sore areas (path of least resistance). It is important that we look for that and make corrections.

I would also like to mention that as coaches we must be flexible in areas concerning our kids. This is not an overnight process, it is a way of life. They will never forget how to lift weights once they are taught the proper mechanics, the proper breathing and proper schedule to achieve positive results through weight training.

With this program we are seeing exceptional gains in speed, power and velocity. If your team is not training in the weight room they are going to be left behind. Take note that this is only a guideline.

We use three, sometime four exercises for each body part we train. A player should not lift his maximum weight. The number of repetitions and the quality of those reps are the most important thing. They are not in the weight room to ‘bulk up.’ They are there to gain strength and maintain flexibility.
WEEK ONE

One week of work is as follows:

Day 1- CHEST

We start by warming up for 15 minutes by treadmill run or bicycle. We use this time to warm the muscles by creating a rapid blood flow. Don’t forget to stretch. Stretch before every session.
- Bench press or flat bench w/ dumbbells Sets-4  Reps  12-15
- Incline press or Incline w/ dumbbells Sets-4  Reps 12-15

If we start with flat bench presses we use incline dumbbells. Conversely if we start with flat bench with dumbbells our next exercises will be incline presses with the bar.
- Flat bench fly’s or incline fly’s every other week.

BACK

We stay away from behind the neck pull downs because with that exercise we put our shoulders in a dangerous position.
- Bent Bar Pull downs- Sets-4 Reps 12-15
- Dumbbell Rows- Sets 4 Reps 12-15
- Chin-ups (not pull-ups) Sets-4 –failure
- Close Grip Pull downs-Sets 4 Reps 12-15

After the first day of chest and back exercises we then work on abdominals. In the crunch position we start with sets of 15 reps to exhaustion.

Day 2- CARDIOVASCULAR AND ABDOMINAL workout. We do this to flush the system out. We want to get rid of as much lactic acid as possible. We also go through our baseball related drills on the field: throwing, hitting, pitching and defensive situations.

ABDOMINAL WORKOUT
- Crunches (straight)-25 reps
- Crunches with a twist (elbow opposite knee)
- Legs halfway in crunch position-25 reps
- Legs straight up-reach for toes and release back to starting position- 25 reps

With the High School team we complete 4 sets 4 times for a total of 400 reps.

DAY 3-LEGS

Legs are our primary focus with total emphasis on strengthening, not how much weight we can squat. In this workout we begin by warming up all muscles.

Then we start isolating each of the different areas. We do this for all our workouts, for every area we train:
- Total, Total, Quads, Hams, Hips and Calves.
- Squats or lunges (alternate each week) Sets 4 Reps 10-15
- Leg Sled or hack squats Sets 3 Reps 10-15
- Leg Extensions (Quads) Sets 3 Reps 10-15
- Leg Curls (hamstrings) Sets 3 Reps 10-15
- Hip abduction and Adduction 2 each 10-15
- Calf raises Sets 3 Reps 20

DAY 4-

Same as day 2 as far as ‘cardio’ and ‘abs’ are concerned. Fieldwork consists of either hitting or defensive drills from 3-5 PM with a 7-inning game at 5. We run distance for 20 minutes with short 40-yard sprints after a few minutes of rest. We are adaptable as to how many sprints are done. We don’t want this to be looked on as punishment. Flexibility is the key to keeping kids interested and excited about cardiovascular training. Running distances is not fun so we try to have a good mix of different courses and distances so they don’t get bored.
DAY 5 - BICEPS & TRICEPS

- Straight bar curls Sets 4 Reps 10-15
- Bent Bar Curls (close grip) Sets 3 Reps 10-15
- Hammer Curls Sets 3 Reps 10-15
- Reverse Curls (prone position of hands) Sets 3 Reps 10-15

For biceps the only way we can isolate different areas is by changing hand positions and back elevations during the pulling motions. For triceps we want to isolate the muscle totally.

- Triceps Push Downs (straight bar) Sets 4 reps 10-15
- Dips Sets 4 reps x failure (alternate weekly)
- Close Grip Bench Sets 4 Reps 10-15
- Overhead Dumbbell Extensions Sets 4 reps 10-15
- Bent Bar Tri Extensions (Push downs) Sets 4 Reps 10-15

The following week we eliminate the biceps and triceps work and substitute shoulder exercises on an alternating basis.

SHOULDER

- Seated Dumbbell Presses Sets 4 reps 10-15
- Straight arm lateral Raises (front) Sets 3 Reps 10-15 each arm
- Upright Rows Sets 4 Reps 10-15
- Bent Over reverse Fly’s Sets 3 reps 10-15

Shoulder work is tricky. We stay away from military presses and behind the neck military presses. It is important to maintain flexibility.

DOT DRILLS

The Dot drills are very good drills for developing balance, agility and over-all athleticism. We do them in the weight room.

There are 5 dots on a 4’ x 6’ rubber mat. The drills consist of jumping from dot to dot 5 different ways. The routine is timed and the players attempt to do them in 45 seconds.

1. With both feet spread on the first 2 dots the player jumps to the middle dot and then to the other end dots. He then jumps backwards to the middle and to the first 2 dots.
2. Starting with the right foot on the left dot he jumps left, right, middle, left, right, middle, right left. (one leg)
3. Repeat with the left leg.
4. With both feet on the first dot he jumps left, right, middle, left, right and back.
5. Both feet spread and then spin around.

We also jump rope on days we do agility drills.

This routine is a guide. It is not etched in stone. We make adjustments to our program to remain flexible. We listen to the kids’ comments about soreness so we can make modifications.
# STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING OFF-SEASON PROGRAM
## HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-up &amp; Stretch</th>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHEST BACK</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABDOMINAL</td>
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### Warm-up & Stretch
- Bench Press or Flat Bench with Dumbbells
- Incline Press or Incline with Dumbbells
- Bent Bar Pull downs
- Dumbbell Rows
- Chin-ups (not pull-ups)
- Close Grip Pull downs
- Alternate Squats and Lunges
- Leg Sled or Hack Squat
- Leg Extensions (quads)
- Leg Curls
- Hip Abduction and Adduction
- Calf Raises
- Alternate Squats and Lunges
- Leg Sled or Hack Squat
- Leg Extensions (quads)
- Leg Curls
- Hip Abduction and Adduction
- Calf Raises

### Warm-up & Stretch
- 20 Minute Run
- Sprints
- Baseball Field
- 20 Minute Run
- Sprints
- Baseball Field

### Warm-up & Stretch
- Seated Dumbbell Presses
- Straight Arm Lateral Raises
- Upright Rows
- Bent Over reverse Fly’s
WHY NOT SITUATIONAL DEFENSIVE BASEBALL PRACTICE?

We made a comment in our Coaches Practice Planner and in one of our “Tips of the Week” that ‘situational baseball practice is essentially a waste of time.’

We got some feed back from some coaches, youth and high school coaches alike, who did not agree. What is situational baseball practice? “OK guys, (the coach is addressing the 9 players in their respective positions (The other players, the non-starters are usually base runners,) one out, a runner on first.” Then he hits a ground ball to the shortstop. The shortstop bobbles the ball and incorrectly flips it to the second baseman who using faulty footwork and arm action, promptly throws the ball in the dirt at the first baseman’s feet. The first baseman lets the ball go by him and it rolls to the fence. The play took about 15 seconds. A runner can get to first in less than 5.

“OK guys, let’s do it again.” And the coach hits another fungo to the shortstop but this time he hits it too hard and the infielder can’t make the play. He “OLE’s” it. (The coach slowly but surely begins to think he does not have a good team.) Does he not have a good team or are they not being taught baseball skills?

Meanwhile the outfielders are standing around picking their noses and precious practice time goes whizzing by.

What is wrong with this picture? Several things are wrong.

1. The players get bored. That is not a very good teaching environment.
2. A lot of time is wasted. There is too much standing around by the players not involved in the play and the coach ends up yelling at them to “back up a base!”
   - The outfielders get an attitude and tell their dads that they don’t want to play right field. The dads criticize the coach and etc, etc, etc.
   - Practice time is much too limited and valuable for that kind of nonsense.
   - If you are going to put a kid in the outfield, teach him how to play the position.
   - I would much rather have an outfielder who could track the ball and catch it than to have him worry about which base to back up.
   - Let’s get our priorities in order. It takes about 10 minutes to teach the players where to go to back up plays.
   - It takes 3+ years to build building competent baseball skills.
3. There was no teaching, except for the capacity to get out of the way of a ‘too-hard-hit’ fungo. The coach is directing the players and telling them what to do. He is not teaching skills.
   - I have talked about this with Coach Grant. He believes coaches do a lot of situational practice because they simply don’t know how to teach baseball skills. This type of practice is “busy work.” And it is very widespread.
4. Since he is not being taught the skill, any movement a player makes incorrectly is reinforced.
   - Instead of positive reinforcement, you get negative. With a season full of incorrect repetitions you get built-in muscle memory that will impede a player’s development.

What would have been a better way of teaching the double play? The coach could kneel down 10 feet from second base on the infield grass and roll balls to the shortstop and teach him the correct way to make the play. By rolling the balls the players can concentrate on fielding, footwork and throwing and not have to worry about a hard-hit baseball. By kneeling in front of the bag, the coach can assist the players with their footwork in turning the double play. All the middle infielders could get in line at short and second and go through the drill, slowly at first and then game speed after the players get it correctly. By kneeling on the infield grass, the coach is close enough to see the footwork around the bag and make corrections.

Then he rolls balls to the second baseman. He teaches and makes corrections to every player. Fifteen minutes will get an infielder a lot of correct repetitions. What is everyone else doing? Another coach is hitting fly balls to the outfielders and a pitcher is throwing his bullpen session. The first baseman is working on his game by taking the throws from the middle infielders. The third baseman is working on fielding slow rollers. By breaking the team into small groups everyone stays busy, the players have more fun and the coaches have a much better teaching environment. Here it is in a nutshell: By isolating the different baseball skills you have a better approach to teaching them and you have more time for the necessary repetitions. And everyone has more fun. Players learn better in that kind of environment. You know what else is beneficial with this approach? There is more time for batting practice.

Who said hitting is the single hardest thing to do well in sports? Could it have been Ted Williams? Let’s get the bats out. I have seen coaches use situational defensive baseball as an excuse for practice day in and day out. Is it because they don’t know what else to do? I have seen coaches yelling at players for executing poor skills when that coach hasn’t even taught the skills. Is it because they don’t know how to teach or won’t make the effort?
1. Teach the **pivot** method rather than the ‘square around’ method.
2. Lay 10 baseball cards on the infield (5 near each baseline) at strategic areas. Choose the areas where the bunt will be most effective.
3. Have hitters bunt 5 times and mark his closest ball to a card.
4. Rotate through the team until all cards are ‘won.’

This is a great drill for teaching young hitters the value of a well-placed bunt. Competition makes this a very interesting drill.

**TIPS:**
- For a sacrifice, “**Show bunt**” early. Don’t wait too long or the bunt may not be successful.
- A common mistake is to reach out for the ball. Wait until the ball gets there and simply let it hit the bat.
- On a low pitch **don’t drop** the barrel of the bat. The bunt will be popped up. Instead, bend the legs to go down to get the low pitch. Tell the players they are like an elevator. The legs go down and take the bat with them.
- Teach them how to bunt down each base line. For a bunt along the first base line, point the **end** of the bat at the third base bag. Along the third base line, point the **head** of the bat at the first base bag.
- Have the hitter **move up** a little in the box, in front of the plate. This cuts down on bunted foul balls.
- A pitching machine makes this drill move faster.
MISCELLANEOUS YOUTH DRILLS

These drills have a specific purpose and/or provide some variety for the players.

**Teaching Sliding** - Line the players along the outfield foul line. Have them sit on the grass and make a ‘figure 4’ with their legs. That is the position they should be in when they slide. Lay out a flattened large cardboard box 60’ away in the outfield. (You can get these boxes from an appliance store or auto body shop.) Have the players take off their shoes and one at a time run full speed to the box and simply sit down on that ‘figure 4.’ The tendency is to drag their hands on the ground behind them. Have them keep their hands in the air. This drill is a lot of fun. (They won’t want to quit)

**Short Hops** - Arrange the players in two lines, about 10’ apart, facing each other in the outfield grass. Each member of one group has a baseball. The other players get into the ‘ready’ fielding position with their gloves on the ground. The players with the baseballs toss the ball on the ground in front of the players’ gloves. The player fields the ball by looking the ball into his glove and bringing the ball into his stomach. The tosses should be medium speed. The players’ gloves should be as wide open as possible. They should not move their feet during this drill but keep them in a shoulder wide, athletic position (this is a ‘hands’ only drill). The players should have their hands out in front of their body. They may also do this drill kneeling. (5 min)

**Infield Fungos with no Glove** - line players behind third base. They have no gloves. Hit medium speed ground balls, they field them and throw to first. This drill teaches the players to have soft hands and takes away fear of the baseball. You may use RIF balls. (5 min)

**Fly Balls Near the Fence** - Throw high fly balls to the outfielders so they have to go back on the ball and catch it near the fence. They should keep their eyes on the ball and reach out to find the fence with their throwing hand. (5 min)

**Rounding First** - line the players behind the batter’s box. Have a coach in medium center field and a player or coach at second base. The first player slaps his hands to simulate a swing and sprints to first. Another coach hits a ground or fly ball into the outfield. As the runner approaches first base he takes his 8’ arc, hits the inside corner of the bag and rounds the base at full speed. The coach in the outfield either makes the play or bobbles the ball, allowing the runner to make the decision to keep going to second base. If the coach makes the play, the runner quickly returns to first. This drill teaches players to be aggressive and intelligent on the base paths. (10-15 min) *Good Base Running Drill

**Football Drill** - (variation of Quarterbacks—a good drill when no field is available) Line players behind the outfield foul line. On ‘go’ the first player sprints into the outfield. The coach with a baseball calls “left, right or ball.” On left the player makes a sharp turn to his left and looks for a ‘pass.’ “Ball” means the coach is throwing the ball directly over the player’s head. After the catch the next player in line hold up both hands in the ‘goal post’ position. The player who caught the ball fires it into this ‘cut-off’ man. This drill involves athleticism, catching and throwing accuracy. (10-15 min)

**Skull Session** - (Rain days or days when the field is too wet) Coach tests individual players with situational questions. He may give baseball cards for right answers. These are great times to watch an instructional video, go over mental mistakes, your philosophy, etc. (1 hour)

**Sports Center Highlights** - players line up deep in the outfield. The coach throws or hits a medium fly ball. Hit it in such a way that the player has to sprint and ‘lay out’ to catch the ball. Teaches the player to be aggressive coming in on the ball. (10 min)

**Around the Horn** - (all players) Place the players 3 deep at each base. The catcher starts the drill. He throws to the third baseman, third to second to first and back to the catcher. (Counterclockwise) The players must move their feet, catch the ball out in front of their bodies with 2 hands and quickly throw the ball to the next base. After 3 rounds of that, they throw clockwise. This is harder because their shoulders are not closed to their target. The ‘teach’ for this is “Change places with your feet.” It is the responsibility of the coach to keep this drill moving at high intensity. He may end the practice with this drill. He also may challenge them to go around a certain number of times without an error (Perhaps 5 each way). He can time this drill and challenge the players to improve their time. (10-15 min)
Short hops fielded on knees. Good “hands only” drill

This short hop drill is also “hands only.” Don’t move the feet

From a kneeling position practice “laying out for balls

Hit ground ball fungos during Batting Practice

Pitchers covering first base

SLASH BUNT (Also called Slug Bunt or Butcher Boy)

Batter shows bunt early As pitcher’s front foot lands the batter draws the bat back into the hitting position. (Notice he remains “choked up” on the bat.) Batter hits the ball on the ground into the middle of the infield, past the pitcher.
Don’t screech if you don’t teach.

NOTES: