

Prince Albert Minor Baseball Association

Practice Plan Guidelines & Drills



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Introduction

The Prince Albert Minor Baseball youth coaching manual has been developed with two main objectives in mind. One, to assist managers and coaches to prepare for, and run, effective practices. And two, to promote and instill a more consistent coaching methodology throughout all levels, one that we're confident will keep the players engaged and interested in the game of baseball, and one that is designed to develop and enhance the players' skills as they progress through the Prince Albert Minor Baseball program.

Included in this manual are a series of practice plans organized by skill level (ex. Rally Cap, U11, and U13). The practice plans included are intended to be used as is, especially for those instructing youth baseball for the first time, but we encourage managers and coaches to utilize the drills and practice formats that they have found to be effective or may be better suited depending on the skill level of their team's players. A brief description of each of the drills may be found in the "Practice Drills Summary" section.

At the end of the manual, you also find a player evaluation form. We feel it is important and necessary for each coach to assess each player's end of season skills and attributes. This information and feedback will be shared with the age group coordinators and used to help balance teams the following year. Instructions for using the players evaluation are included on the form.

Perfect Practice Makes Perfect

Baseball players are indeed creatures of habit. These habits and routines are shaped at an early age and reinforced by repetition. Through repetition and practice, players are better positioned to execute in game situations. Repetition alone, however, does not ensure success. The players must be taught the proper way to execute a drill, skill, or play. This is vitally important, especially for younger players or those playing the game for the first time. Recognize too that not all players develop their skills or understanding of the game at the same pace. If you see that a player is not fully grasping the concept of a drill or play, take the time to work with the player individually.

Preparation

Take the time to prepare and review your practice plan in advance of your practice. If possible, bring copies of and review your practice plan with coaches and volunteers. When you have a plan, the players will remain engaged, the parents will appreciate that you are prepared, and you will find that your coaching experience will be more rewarding.

Coaching Tips

- Prepare for your practice in advance, start on time, and stick to your timeline (refer to sample practice plans).
- Set expectations for the practice and the season – we encourage coaches at all levels to conduct a “parent meeting” at the beginning of the season and to set ground rules for the players.
- Ask for help (the more volunteers the better), but don’t be afraid to tell volunteers how you want drills organized and executed – this is still your practice.
- Keep the kids moving, for example, run stations and limit the amount of time at each. If necessary, break the kids up into smaller groups to maintain their attention and increase their repetitions.
- Reinforce routines, for example, start each practice the same way (running and stretching, throwing mechanics, etc.), and have a designated place to play catch (ex. right or left field foul lines).
- Don’t sweat the small stuff. Kids will be kids. There’s not a great deal you can do about that but set guidelines for conduct.
- Keep it fun by incorporating contests, games, or competitions. (Refer to sample practice plans).
- Focus on the basics and skills development. Baseball is about muscle memory caused by repetition of good mechanics.
- Try to incorporate “situations” at each practice to teach the kids the game.

If you have any questions regarding the practice plans or drills, please contact the division coordinator.

Good luck!

Junior & Senior Rally Practice Stations & Instructions

Station 1: Hitting (wiffle balls, bats, and tees)

- Each player has a tee; separate left and righthanded hitters.
- Knuckles are lined up or close to it, loose grip, hands maintained at the top of strike zone, knob of bat pointing to opposite batter's box (bat at 45-degree angle), elbows are down, hands are lined up at the back shoulder.
- Feet are shoulders-width apart, in a straight line with toes pointing forward and slightly in, knees slightly bent, and weight of body is balanced on a flat foot.
- Weight is back (65% back foot, 35% front foot), stride is soft, slow, straight, short, and shallow – the “5 S's” – and the stride is always towards the pitcher.
- Hands stay inside the ball through the swing, knob of the bat leads the way, eyes stay out front, head has very little movement, pivot on the back foot (“push the ground”)

Station 2: Pop-ups (tennis balls)

Form at least two lines (ask for volunteers)

- Start without gloves, then progress to using a glove
- Both hands should be held out high with palms facing up and fingers back
- Emphasize the triangle shape both hands make, i.e., hands should be relatively close to one another
- Head and shoulders should be directly under the ball when catch is being made
- Throwing hand covers the ball as it enters the glove

Station 3: Throwing mechanics (soft baseballs)

Pair players together or work in small groups

- Introduce a variety of throwing drills that are intended to train and reinforce the proper throwing motion, e.g., flick, arm drag, one-knee, and two knee drills (see Coaching Drills Summary)
- Show players how to hold the ball, i.e., 4-seam grip or cross-seam grip
- Introduce “breakdown” drill (aka, “set, break, throw”) after one or two practices
- Stress importance of aiming glove at target, then tucking during follow-through
- Players should always step towards their target (many younger players have a tendency to drift or step towards the “glove side” of target)

Station 4: Fielding ground balls (soft baseballs)

Work in small groups of two or three

- Demonstrate the proper fielding position (knees bent and butt down, hands out in front, head down, bring ball into belly with both hands, pop up into throwing position)

- Start with ground balls without gloves at relatively close distance; introduce gloves and lengthen distance.
- Stress the importance of fielding ball out in front of player and using two hands (alligator arms drill)
- If ball is bobbled and dropped, teach players to push ball into ground with bare hand then pick up and throw.

Station 5: Base running (bases, balls)

- Infield hit - players first find ball then keep head down and run through first base (i.e., no sliding or lunging)
- Ground ball through infield: players find ball then begin turn (the “question mark”) once they see it go through the infield; teach players to step on inside corner of bag then make short choppy steps as the ball is fielded cleanly
- Clean base hit: players begin turn (the “banana”) out of the batter’s box
- First to third and second to home: teach players to find coach and look for signal to advance or stay; waive some players, hold others

Station 6: Pop-ups (tennis balls)

Form at least two lines (ask for volunteers)

- Depending on skill level, either repeat Station 2 or introduce “left and right fly ball” or “football” drills
- Demonstrate the drop step technique and how to run to a spot
- Players should still attempt to position themselves under the ball and use two hands

Station 7: Fielding ground balls (soft baseballs)

Work in small groups of two or three

- Depending on skill level, either repeat Station 4 or introduce other fielding drills (e.g., “roll back and forth”, “shuffle”, and “rapid fire” drills)
- Continue to focus on proper fielding form, including moving feet to ensure ball is fielded in front of player (i.e., limit diving and lunging for balls)

Station 8: Throwing mechanics (soft baseballs)

- Work on drills not covered in Station 3

Station 9: Live pitching (helmets, wiffle balls, bats)

- Arrange players in one to two circles and pitch wiffle balls from one knee
- Continue to focus on mechanics (stance, hands/feet positioning, stride) and introduce concepts of timing and tempo for more advanced players (e.g., they begin stride as you bring arm back in throwing motion)
- Players should be in “ready” position while waiting (no swinging!) Pitch three to four balls to one player then move on to the next
- Ask parents to help collect balls and keep kids separated

Station 10: Fielding and hitting (helmets, bats, and tees)

- Let the kids enjoy themselves at this station
- Split kids up into two groups; one group hits balls off the tee while the other fields and tosses back to hitting area

Ull Practice Plan 1

1 hour, 30 minutes

Warm Up (10 minutes) Together

- Jog around bases 3 times or to an outfield fence and back slowly increasing your pace as you go. Key is to elevate your heart rate and get a sweat on.
- Some dynamic stretching. Keep those big muscles in mind like upper legs and shoulders. A good mix would be knee lifts, squats, lunges, arm circles, karaoke, core twists.
- After a good warm up and dynamic stretch, each player should do some sprints or accelerations. Try and make them at least as far as the distance between two bases.
- Play catch with meaning. Do not let players build bad habits with poor throwing mechanics. (See – “Playing Catch” in the drills section)

Throwing (15 minutes) Together

- Flick drill (5 minutes)
- Arm drag (5 minutes)
- Two-knee drill (5 minutes)

Stations work (40 minutes)

Fielding – infield (15 minutes)

- Alligator arms (5 minutes)
- Shuffle (5 minutes)
- Breakdown (5 minutes)

Fielding – outfield (10 minutes)

- Pop flies (5 minutes)
- Left and right fly balls (5 minutes) Game

Pitching (15 minutes)

- Towel drill (5 minutes)
- Scarecrow (5 minutes)
- Live pitching (5 minutes) – need a catcher to assist with this station. Typically, just use the group to rotate throw as a catcher and then a ghost hitter.

Base running (10 minutes) Station

- Run through first – no sliding! (5 minutes)
- Making the turn (5 minutes)

Station Work (30 Minutes – 10 minutes each)

Hitting - Players rotate amongst stations

- Station A: Soft toss
- Station B: In the field (fielding BP)
- Station C: Batting practice

U11 Practice Plan II

1 hour, 30 minutes

Warm Up (10 minutes) Together

- Jog around bases 3 times or to an outfield fence and back slowly increasing your pace as you go. Key is to elevate your heart rate and get a sweat on.
- Some dynamic stretching. Keep those big muscles in mind like upper legs and shoulders. A good mix would be knee lifts, squats, lunges, arm circles, karaoke, core twists.
- After a good warm up and dynamic stretch, each player should do some sprints or accelerations. Try and make them at least as far as the distance between two bases.
- Play catch with meaning. Do not let players build bad habits with poor throwing mechanics.

Throwing (20 minutes)

- Flick drill (5 minutes)
- One-knee drill (5 minutes)
- Play catch – Head or Chest (5 minutes)
- Back 'em up three (5 minutes) Game

Fielding – infield (15 minutes)

- Roll back and forth (5 minutes)
- Ready, set, go (5 minutes)
- Rapid fire (5 minutes)

Fielding – outfield (10 minutes)

- Pop flies (5 minutes)
- Football drill – (5 minutes)

Base running (10 minutes)

- First to third (5 minutes)
- Second to home (5 minutes)

Hitting & Pitching (30 minutes) Players rotate amongst stations

- Station A: Soft toss
- Station B: Pitching (on the side)
- Station C: Batting practice
- Station D: In the field (fielding BP)

U11 Practice Plan III

1 hour, 30 minutes

Warm Up (10 minutes) Together

- Jog around bases 3 times or to an outfield fence and back slowly increasing your pace as you go. Key is to elevate your heart rate and get a sweat on.
- Some dynamic stretching. Keep those big muscles in mind like upper legs and shoulders. A good mix would be knee lifts, squats, lunges, arm circles, karaoke, core twists.
- After a good warm up and dynamic stretch, each player should do some sprints or accelerations. Try and make them at least as far as the distance between two bases.
- Play catch with meaning. Do not let players build bad habits with poor throwing mechanics.

Throwing (15 minutes)

- Flick drill (5 minutes)
- One-knee drill (5 minutes)
- Throwing relay drill (5 minutes) Game

Stations (45 minutes)

Fielding – infield (15 minutes)

- Roll back and forth (5 minutes)
- Four square – rotate positions (10 minutes)

Fielding – outfield (10 minutes)

- Pop flies – in groups (5 minutes) Ground balls – in groups (5 minutes)

Pitching (15 minutes)

- Towels (5 minutes)
- Target Drill (10 minutes)

Base running (10 minutes)

- Diamond relay (10 minutes) Game

Hitting & Situations (35 minutes)

Hitting Stations (15 minutes)

- Soft toss (or tee)

- Whiffle circle (two groups)

Situations (20 minutes)

- Four, four and four (or three, three and three)

U11 Practice Plan IV

1 hour, 30 minutes

Warm Up (10 minutes) Together

- Jog around bases 3 times or to an outfield fence and back slowly increasing your pace as you go. Key is to elevate your heart rate and get a sweat on.
- Some dynamic stretching. Keep those big muscles in mind like upper legs and shoulders. A good mix would be knee lifts, squats, lunges, arm circles, karaoke, core twists.
- After a good warm up and dynamic stretch, each player should do some sprints or accelerations. Try and make them at least as far as the distance between two bases.
- Play catch with meaning. Do not let players build bad habits with poor throwing mechanics.

Throwing (10 minutes)

- Arm drag (5 minutes)
- Play catch – hit the target (5 minutes) Game

Stations (45 minutes)

Fielding – infield (20 minutes)

- Ground balls – throw to first, rotate positions (10 minutes)
- Middle infield drills (10 minutes)

Fielding – outfield (10 minutes)

- Fly/Pop fly ball priorities (10 minutes)

Pitching (15 minutes)

- Scarecrow drill (5 minutes)
- Step offs (10 minutes)

Hitting & Situations (35 minutes)

Hitting Stations (15 minutes)

- Soft toss (or tee)
- Wiffle circle (two groups)

Situations (20 minutes)

- Four, four and four (or three, three and three)

U13 Practice Plan I

1 hour, 30 minutes

Warm Up (10 minutes) Together

- Jog around bases 3 times or to an outfield fence and back slowly increasing your pace as you go. Key is to elevate your heart rate and get a sweat on.
- Some dynamic stretching. Keep those big muscles in mind like upper legs and shoulders. A good mix would be knee lifts, squats, lunges, arm circles, karaoke, core twists.
- After a good warm up and dynamic stretch, each player should do some sprints or accelerations. Try and make them at least as far as the distance between two bases.
- Play catch with meaning. Do not let players build bad habits with poor throwing mechanics.

Play catch Throwing (15 minutes)

- Arm drag (5 minutes)
- Flick drill (5 minutes)
- One-knee drill (5 minutes)

Stations (45 minutes)

Fielding – infield (15 minutes)

- Roll back and forth (5 minutes)
- Shuffle (5 minutes)
- Breakdown – “ready, set, go” (5 minutes)

Fielding – outfield (10 minutes)

- Pop flies (5 minutes)
- Left and right fly balls (5 minutes)

Pitching (15 minutes)

- Towel drill (5 minutes)
- Scarecrow (5 minutes)
- Live pitching (5 minutes) – need a catcher to assist with this station. Typically, just use the group to rotate throw as a catcher and then a ghost hitter.

Game Base running (10 minutes)

- Run through first
- The banana
- The question mark

Hitting Stations (30 minutes)

- Station A: Soft toss
- Station B: In the field (fielding BP)
- Station C: Batting practice

UI3 Practice Plan II

1 hour, 30 minutes

Warm Up (10 minutes) Together

- Jog around bases 3 times or to an outfield fence and back slowly increasing your pace as you go. Key is to elevate your heart rate and get a sweat on.
- Some dynamic stretching. Keep those big muscles in mind like upper legs and shoulders. A good mix would be knee lifts, squats, lunges, arm circles, karaoke, core twists.
- After a good warm up and dynamic stretch, each player should do some sprints or accelerations. Try and make them at least as far as the distance between two bases.
- Play catch with meaning. Do not let players build bad habits with poor throwing mechanics.

Play catch Throwing (20 minutes)

- Flick drill (5 minutes)
- Two-knee drill (5 minutes)
- Play catch – hit the target (5 minutes)
- Back 'em up three (5 minutes)

Stations (45 minutes)

Game Fielding – infield (15 minutes)

- Roll back and forth (5 minutes)
- Shuffle (5 minutes)
- Rapid fire (5 minutes)

Fielding – outfield (10 minutes)

- Pop flies (5 minutes)
- Football drill (5 minutes)

Pitching (15 minutes)

- Towels (5 minutes)
- Target Drill (10 minutes)

Base running (10 minutes)

- First to third (5 minutes)
- Second to home (5 minutes)

Hitting & Pitching (30 minutes)

Players rotate amongst stations

- Station A: Soft toss
- Station B: Pitching (on the side)
- Station C: Batting practice
- Station D: In the field (fielding BP)

U13 Practice Plan III

1 hour, 30 minutes

Warm Up (10 minutes) Together

- Jog around bases 3 times or to an outfield fence and back slowly increasing your pace as you go. Key is to elevate your heart rate and get a sweat on.
- Some dynamic stretching. Keep those big muscles in mind like upper legs and shoulders. A good mix would be knee lifts, squats, lunges, arm circles, karaoke, core twists.
- After a good warm up and dynamic stretch, each player should do some sprints or accelerations. Try and make them at least as far as the distance between two bases.
- Play catch with meaning. Do not let players build bad habits with poor throwing mechanics.

Play catch Throwing (15 minutes)

- Flick drill (5 minutes)
- One-knee drill (5 minutes)
- Throwing relay drill (5 minutes)

Game Fielding – infield (15 minutes)

- Roll back and forth (5 minutes)
- Four square – rotate positions (10 minutes)
- Coaches note: Pull 2-3 players aside to work on catcher's drills
 - Stance
 - Blocking balls
 - Framing pitches (start with tennis balls/bare hands)
 - Stealing – footwork and throwing

Fielding pop flies Base running (10 minutes)

- Diamond relay (10 minutes)

Game Hitting & Situations (35 minutes)

Stations – rotate players (20 minutes)

- Soft toss, in the field, use pitching screen (5 minutes)
- Hitting off tee (5 minutes)
- Fielding soft toss (5 minutes)
- Pitching, on the side (5 minutes)

Situations (15 minutes)

- Four, four and four (or three, three and three)

U13 Practice Plan IV

1 hour, 30 minutes

Warm Up (10 minutes) Together

- Jog around bases 3 times or to an outfield fence and back slowly increasing your pace as you go. Key is to elevate your heart rate and get a sweat on.
- Some dynamic stretching. Keep those big muscles in mind like upper legs and shoulders. A good mix would be knee lifts, squats, lunges, arm circles, karaoke, core twists.
- After a good warm up and dynamic stretch, each player should do some sprints or accelerations. Try and make them at least as far as the distance between two bases.
- Play catch with meaning. Do not let players build bad habits with poor throwing mechanics.

Throwing (10 minutes)

- Play catch – hit the target (5 minutes)
- Long toss (5 minutes)

Stations (45 minutes)

Fielding – infield (25 minutes)

- Four square – rotate positions (10 minutes) Game
- Middle infield drills (10 minutes)
- Hot corner situations (5 minutes)

Fielding – outfield (15 minutes)

- Pop flies (5 minutes)
- Ground balls (5 minutes)
- Do or die – throw home (5 minutes)

Pitching (15 minutes)

- Towel drill (5 minutes)
- Scarecrow (5 minutes)
- Live pitching (5 minutes) – need a catcher to assist with this station. Typically, just use the group to rotate throw as a catcher and then a ghost hitter.

Game Hitting & Situations (35 minutes)

Batting practice (15 minutes)

- Use live catcher
- On-deck batter does soft toss

Situations (20 minutes)

- Players at positions
- Use live runners

U13 Practice Plan V

1 hour, 30 minutes

Warm Up (10 minutes) Together

- Jog around bases 3 times or to an outfield fence and back slowly increasing your pace as you go. Key is to elevate your heart rate and get a sweat on.
- Some dynamic stretching. Keep those big muscles in mind like upper legs and shoulders. A good mix would be knee lifts, squats, lunges, arm circles, karaoke, core twists.
- After a good warm up and dynamic stretch, each player should do some sprints or accelerations. Try and make them at least as far as the distance between two bases.
- Play catch with meaning. Do not let players build bad habits with poor throwing mechanics.

Throwing (10 minutes)

- Play catch – hit the target (5 minutes)
- Throwing relay drill (5 minutes) Game

Fielding – three groups (15 minutes each)

Infielders

- Ground balls
- Four square
- Double plays

Outfielders

- Fly balls
- Football drill

Catchers

- Blocking balls
- Footwork
- Framing
- Fielding pop flies

Base running (15 minutes)

- Through first
- First to third
- The banana
- Second to home
- The question mark

Hitting & Situations (25 minutes)

- Four, four and four (or three, three and three)

Infield and outfield pregame routine (20 minutes)

Infield

- Throw to first
- Double play
- Progressive
- Throw to home
- Slow roller – throw to first
- Fly/Pop fly ball priorities

Outfield

- Throw to second
- Throw to third
- Throw to home
- Do or die – throw to home
- Follow the throw home
- Fly/Pop fly ball priorities

Practice Drills Summary

Throwing & Catching Drills

The first thing that needs to be taught about throwing and catching is how to hold a ball and how to hold the glove as a target. Be sure to teach players to hold the ball with a 4-seam grip. That means their fingers will cross the 4 seams of the horseshoe, with the tips of their fingers on the seams for better grip upon release. Their index and middle fingers should be on top of the ball with their thumb on the bottom. The ball should not be set back in the palm, rather the fingers should just wrap around the ball. The glove should be held at shoulder height on the glove side with a small amount of flex in the glove hand elbow.

1. Playing Catch – Before a practice, be sure players are playing catch with a purpose. It is important that you as the coach are out there watching and giving feedback during this time. Players are learning habits; you need to control those habits.
 - a. Start about 30 feet apart and work on catch, turn, load, and fire. Start with lower intensity and slowly increase velocity. Low intensity does not mean bad mechanics or poor accuracy.
 - b. During this 30-foot warm up players can also do the circle drill. This means that the player catches the ball, make a quick circle from glove to throw. The drill works on quick transfer and proper mechanics of the throw.
 - c. Widen the gap until you are about 70 feet apart using the same good mechanics.
 - d. Add in ground balls to glove side or arm side as well as fly balls to their left and right, but only about 5-10 feet max.
 - e. Move your distance to long toss, around 120 feet. Work on one bounce to partner.
 - f. Get into groups of 3 or 4 and work on cut offs. Simulate OF to MI to IB. The receiver has arm side to the ball, catch across your body, step, and throw to next target. These should not bounce. You can also turn this one into a relay drill. The outside players should be your IF and the inside players should be your OF. First a tag then throw, then a relay throw, another relay throw, and finish with a catch/tag.
 - g. Get players in groups of 4 and create a square that is about 70-80 feet in length. Players can work on 4 shuffles, 2 shuffles, no shuffle. You can also change direction to say they need to throw to glove side or arm side, this will force them to get feet turned around and to work on pivots.
 - h. Get players into a group of 5 and form a star. As the ball travels around, it will trace the shape of a star. This will change angles and can also be done by throwing in an arm side or glove side direction.
2. Hand Eye Drill – Toss the ball in the air with your bare hand. Try and catch it with the other. Switch hands, toss it higher, catch it behind your back, etc. Add a glove.

3. Flick drill – Players are kneeling with their throwing side knee on the ground and their glove side knee up. They should be about 5’ – 10 feet apart depending on age and size. The player will have their throwing arm elbow in their glove and use only their wrist to throw ball to partner. Elbow height should be equal to shoulder. Emphasize wrist snap at release to improve velocity, carry and accuracy.
4. One-knee drill - As players get better at the Flick Drill, have them stay in the kneeling position, with shoulders and hips facing their target and front toe turned in slightly. They should have the ball in their throwing hand inside their glove just below chest height. They want to start the “break” by bringing the ball down out of the glove in a circular pattern until it rotates down, back, and up to where the elbow is at shoulder height and at a 90-degree angle. Their chest and shoulder should have rotated back 90-degrees, so their glove arm is pointing at the target. The ball should be facing away from the player, the wrist should be flexed, and the glove hand pointed at the target. Once here, players should look back at their arm to correct any errors and then throw the ball to their partner by leading with their elbow, snapping their wrist, and tucking the glove. After release the throwing arm crosses the front side of the body by the opposite leg.
5. Two-knee drill – Same drill as above, but both knees are on the ground and player is facing partner. Start with ball in glove, then break, and bring the ball down, back, and up. The glove arm is now up and pointing at target with a slight bend in the elbow. Throwing arm is in ready position with elbow equal to shoulder, at 90-degree angle and ball pointed away. As player throws, glove is tucked into chest/armpit, and after ball is released, throwing hand/arm crosses front side leg.
6. Head or Chest – This drill will work on throwing accuracy. The object of the drill is to gain points by throwing the ball directly at a player's head or chest. If player hits partner in face/head area, they get 2 points. If player hits partner above belt in the upper torso area, they get one point. First person to ten wins. Switch partners and play again. Distance apart will depend on age and size of athletes.
7. Back ‘em up three - Form two lines with players facing one another in pairs. Players play catch. If the ball is caught, one partner backs up three steps. Continue with one partner backing up three steps each time ball is caught. If the ball is not caught, that player must take two steps towards their partner. Play for a given amount of time (3 minutes) and see what group can get the furthest apart.
8. Long Toss – This drill is meant to build arm strength in a safe manner will also teach the importance of release point. Players start by facing a partner about 15 – 20 feet apart. Again, this distance is dependant on the size and age of the players. Players will begin to play catch, but every two throws, one of the partners should take two steps back. Continue this pattern until the players are up to 150 feet apart, again, age dependant. Teach the players it is okay to bounce a ball to their partner, but the object is to throw the ball in the air the whole way. Once players have reached their maximum distance, they should stay there for the remainder of the drill.

9. Throwing relay drill - Line players up in groups of three or four players, approximately 20-30 yards apart. Player "A" throws to player "B", who in turn throws to player "C" (the "relay"), and so on. If ball is dropped, it must be returned to the thrower before it can be advanced to the next player. First team to return the ball to Player A wins. Emphasize throwing to a target and giving the "cutoff man" a throw they can handle. Receiving player should provide a target and position themselves (moving forward or backwards, if necessary, i.e., to avoid short hops) to receive the ball and make the proper turn and throw to the next player. Glove hand foot should be forward, after catching the player will turn to the glove side and take a step towards their target and throw.

Infield Drills

1. Alligator arms - Break the team up into groups of three or four. Before starting the drill, explain to the players how an alligator jaw works - the ball is its food. Make sure player is in the proper fielding position (knees bent, butt down, hands out front). Roll the ball to the player. When the ball enters the glove, the bare hand covers the ball to secure it. The player's head should remain down and emphasize bringing the ball into his belly. You can perform this drill with or without gloves.
2. Shuffle - Break the team up into groups of three or four. Player assumes proper fielding position. Roll balls to the left or right of the player. Player shuffles once or twice to field the ball and tosses back to coach while maintaining the proper fielding position. Coach receives the ball and rolls again forcing the player to shuffle in the opposite direction. Repeat 4-6 times for each player. Emphasize moving feet quickly so player can field the ball in front of him. Introduce rolls at greater distance from the player so he is required to pivot, cross over and run a few steps to ensure ball is fielded in front of him.
3. Breakdown - Line players up along the foul line and request they assume the fielding position. Say "go". Players run until you say "field", at which point players break down into fielding position. Repeat.
4. Ready, set, go - Line players up so they are facing each, approximately 10-15 yards apart. Players in one line have the ball. When you say "ready", players breakdown into fielding position, holding the ball in their gloves with their hands out front. At "set", players bring ball into their belly then pop up into throwing position, with front foot and glove hand pointing at their partner. At "go", players throw ball to their partner. Emphasize follow through and glove tuck.
5. Pick Off Play - This can be a drill for a pitcher and IB or just the IB. Coach or pitcher can toss different kinds of throws as a pick off, forcing the IB to adjust to bad throws.
6. IB Fungos - Coach will hit fungo ball from SS or 2B simulating throws to IB. Some will be good, some not so good. This will allow the IB to judge when they stride, if they stride, or if they leave their base to stop the ball.

7. IB Toss or Dart – Have the IB stand in a good starting position. Coach will toss at or closer to the base and the IB will underhand toss to a target or coach will toss away from the base so the IB needs to throw an overhand dart to the target.
8. IB Angles – have the first basemen surrounded by about 5 players. One player at a time they will toss a ball to the IB. Some good, some in the dirt. IB picks and drops to the side. This is a rapid-fire drill.
9. IB Footwork – IB will stand on base like they are ready to receive a throw. Coach will give hand signals of left (IB steps to his left), right (IB steps to his right), at (steps towards coach, or up (IB jumps and comes down on base))
10. Fungo Drills – A fungo ball is simply one that is hit by the coach by tossing it up from their glove or free hand.
 - a. Blind – Have players in a line at any position on the infield. The player that is up is facing to the outfield and listening for the crack of the bat. When they hear it they spin, field, and throw to IB (or a net)
 - b. Double blind – You need a line on the left side of the infield and a line on the right. Two coaches will hit balls at the same time. Player will spin, field and hold or throw to a net.
 - c. Hockey Goalie – Have a line of players with a coach about 15 feet away. Set up pylons about 10-15 feet apart where the player will stand between. The coach will hit 6 grounders in a row and the player will need to act like a goalie and shuffle quickly side to side. You can have them flip it to a player as a short toss or throw it into a net or just toss the ball behind.
 - d. Hockey Goalie 2-ball – Have the player stand between 2 pylons that are 15 feet apart. Coach hits one to their left and another to their right, giving them very little time between. Again, you can have a toss to a fielder or just drop the ball and get to the next.
11. Turbo Pepper – Have players on the grass for this drill. Have a batter about 40 feet away from a line of fielders. The coach will be kneeling beside the player tossing to the hitter with only a few seconds between each toss. The same fielder will field about 10 hits in a row. No throw is needed, just field and toss to the side.
12. High Rep Glove Work – Have a line of players with a coach about 10-15 feet in front. Work on receiving the ball at them, back hand, arm side. Have no throw, toss to MI or throw across diamond to player or net.
13. Rebounder – Have the player stand in front of a coach facing the rebounder. The coach will toss a variety of angles from behind the player to they have little time to react. Add in a toss or throw to a base or net. Try and have the rebounder set up such that the ball comes off in the same direction it would from home plate. This can be set up at any base on the infield.
14. Ball in Glove – These are good MI drills to work on diving and footwork. The player will start with the ball in their glove and then work on diving to their left or right, getting up,

and throwing to 1B or a net at 1B. They can also work on two-step, four-step, or no-step, or negative step throws.

15. Knockdown – Here a coach can hit or throw a ground ball at a MI. They are supposed to let it hit their glove, drop to the ground, grab it, and throw it to a target or base.
16. Transfer – Have each player with a ball then they transfer it from glove to hand as fast as they can. Sometimes they go through the legs or behind the back.
17. Roll back and forth - Line players up so they are facing each, approximately 2-3 yards apart. Players proceed to roll ball to another. Players should remain in fielding position throughout the drill and employ proper fielding mechanics (hands out front, head down, bring ball into belly). Perform drill for 20-30 seconds, give players a brief break, then start drill again.
18. Rapid fire - Empty a bucket of balls. Line up players in single file or separate into small groups. Put empty bucket next to the players. Coach rolls balls to the players rapidly. As the player is catching the ball, the next ball is rolled so the players are forced to move quickly. Fielded balls are placed in the bucket. You can use this format for the shuffle drill as well.
19. Shadow Baseball – Just as a boxer can shadow box, we can train our IF to shadow field. They need to be able to be in a ready position, get down, field, and up. Coach will say different commands and the IF will shadow the sequence.
20. Short Hops – Coach will have a bucket of balls about 10-15 feet away from a line of players. He will throw short hops at players working at, back hand, and arm side. Option is to have a target to throw at, either a fielder or a net.
21. Triangles – Have players team up in groups of 3. Rather than playing catch or doing grounders with 2 people, use 3. One person is a feeder, one is on one knee catching short hops and tossing to a player and then that player pivots and throws it back to the feeder. After 10 cycles switch your role. You can add many different variations to what each player must do. More game like to not be throwing in the direction the ball just came from.
22. Figure 8 – Have two lines of players behind 2B and SS. Coach is around the pitchers mound giving short hops at, to backhand, and to arm side. Start at SS, they field, toss to second and go to 2B line. 2B times up approach to the bag, catches, puts in a bucket, and goes to SS line. This is a rapid-fire drill with lots of motion.
23. Partner GB's – In this drill, you will face your partner and work on a quick transfer. Start by getting in a good fielding position, throw the ball to your partner, field it, and give a grounder back. Feet and hips need to pivot, but try not to gain too much air time. Progress to a grounder, field, throw, tag, then move to a grounder, field, throw, throw, tag. Keep adding variations.

24. Four Corners – Players create a square with anywhere from 4 – 8 players standing about 20 feet apart. You will work on underhand tosses and side tosses to both glove side and arm side. If more than 4 players, the tosser rotates with the player behind them each time. This drill will work on the double play toss for a MI.
25. Four square - You will need at least four coaches/volunteers to perform this drill. Place players at infield positions (2-3 players at each position). Two coaches stand on third base line and hit balls to first and second baseman. Two coaches stand on first base line and hit balls to shortstop and third baseman. Hit ground balls and instruct players to make good throws back to the coach. Rotate players amongst positions every 3-4 minutes. Make a game of it. Player must field the ball cleanly and make good throw back to the coach, otherwise, they are eliminated. Last player standing wins.
26. Competitions – Competition at the end of practice is always a good thing.
 - a. Use coaches to be quick feeders in a variety of drills. Use knockout style, so if a player bobbles, double clutches, can't make accurate throw, etc. they are out. You can use short hops, back handers, glove side, slow rollers, etc.
 - b. Have players field a ball from a coach hit and throw to a certain bag, however, the other players are allowed to run in front while the ball is coming or scream and yell at the fielding player to try and distract them. They are not allowed to touch the ball or touch the player, only distract. Have the fielder work on slow rollers, back hands, short hops, etc. Again, play elimination style.

Middle infield / Double play drills

Break players up into two groups, one at the shortstop position and one at the second base position. A player or coach can play first.

1. 4-6-3 double play:
 - Hit or roll balls directly at the second baseman, emphasizing a pivot move and making accurate throw to the shortstop covering second base.
 - Hit or roll balls to left of the second baseman so he is required to run or shuffle a few steps to field the ball. Instruct player to make a spin move (turning body so back is facing home plate) and accurate throw to second base (shortstop covering).
 - Hit or roll balls to right of the second baseman so he is required to shuffle feet to field the ball. This play should result in a flip throw or toss to the shortstop covering the bag. Instruct players to say “flip” so the shortstop knows it will be an underhand throw or soft toss. Second baseman should “follow the toss” to ensure an accurate delivery.
2. 6-4-3 double play:
 - Hit or roll balls directly at the shortstop, emphasizing pivot move or drop step, and making an accurate throw to the second baseman covering the bag.
 - Hit or roll balls to right of the shortstop so he is required to run a few steps to field ball. Instruct player to make drop step and an accurate throw to second baseman.
 - Hit or roll balls to the left of the shortstop so he is required to shuffle feet to field the ball. This play should result in a flip throw or toss to the second baseman covering

the bag. Instruct players to say “flip” so the second baseman knows it will be an underhand throw or soft toss.

Stress the importance of first making an out (“make sure of one”) – the double play is the bonus. If fielded ball is bobbled or dropped, play is to first. Tell players covering second base to always give a target (hold hands up together in upper torso area) and to expect a bad throw (players should take short choppy steps as they approach second base so they can react to off-target throws). Demonstrate pivot moves at the second base bag (e.g., the straddle, cross over, step-back). For balls hit far to the left of second baseman/right of shortstop, the player covering second becomes a first baseman (i.e., stretches when receiving the ball). Tell players covering second base to hold ball if there is no reasonable chance of turning the double play (avoid errant throws).

Hot corner situations

Break players up into three groups - third basemen, first basemen, runners.

1. Man on first, less than two outs:

Hit or roll baseballs to third baseman. Hard hit balls at or to the left or right of third baseman, play is to second base. If ball is hit softly to the third baseman (i.e., a slow roller), play is to first base.

2. Man on first and second, less than two outs:

Hit or roll baseballs to third baseman. Hard hit balls to the left of third baseman, play is to second base. Hard hit balls at or to the right of the third baseman, player steps on third and throws to second or first base, assuming there is a play to be made. If ball is hit softly to the third baseman (i.e., a slow roller), play is to first base.

Again, stress the importance of making an out. If ball is bobbled or dropped, play is to first base. If no play can be made, hold the ball.

Outfield /Pop Fly Drills

1. Drop Drill – Have the player or coach toss the ball in the air at different heights. The goal is to have the OF's spikes hit the ground just before or at the same time as the ball does. This helps with timing and footwork.
2. Bucket Drill – Coach will toss fly ball to an area in the outfield about 20-30 feet away from players. The players are to carry a bucket to the area they think the ball will land and place it on the ground before the ball hits, trying to catch it in the bucket.
3. Y-drill or M-drill – Here you will have pylons set out in the shape of a Y or M and they are about 15-20 feet apart. Create a movement pattern around the Y or M and have a coach deliver 2 or 3 different style balls at different parts of the letter. Change the starting position of the players and it will work on different backhand or arm side movements. For example, you might have a coach toss a flyball at the first change of direction, then a liner at the second, and a ground ball at the third. Many variations can be used as well as spacing of the pylons depending on age and ability of your player.

4. Pop flies - Break players up into two or three groups. Throw or hit fly balls to players (a tennis racquet works nicely too). Demonstrate the proper technique, for example, both hands should be held out high with palms facing up. Head and shoulders should be directly under the ball when catch is being made. Throwing hand covers the ball as it enters the glove.
5. Left and right fly balls - Break players up into two or three groups. Player stands facing coach. Throw the ball over the left or right shoulder of the player. Stress the importance of the drop step with the foot closest to the ball (i.e., if ball is hit over left shoulder, the player should drop step with left foot). Teach the players to run to the spot where they think the catch will be made, turning their back, if necessary. Discourage back-pedaling.
6. Football drill - Break players up into two groups. Player stands facing coach. Explain to players that you will either raise your right or left arm. If right arm is raised, player drop steps with his left foot and sprints to his left at a 45-degree angle from starting point. If left arm is raised, player drop steps with his right foot and sprints to his right at a 45-degree angle from starting point. Lead the player with a throw as you would a football to a receiver. This drill teaches players how to maintain focus on the ball and catch while in a full sprint. Have some fun with this drill and break out the football!
7. Ground balls - Break players up into two or three groups in the outfield. Throw or bat ground balls. For slower hit balls, instruct players to charge ball then break down as they would when fielding a ground ball in the infield. For harder hit balls, show players how to drop to one knee to ensure ball does not get past them. After fielding the ball, players should pop up and throw ball to coach or cut off man.
8. Do or die - This drill is designed to teach players how to charge and field balls hit into the outfield and throw players out (“do or die”) or prevent them from advancing a base. Break players up into two groups. Throw or bat ground balls to the players. Instruct players to charge the ball and field it while maintaining a stride. Players should position themselves such that they field the ball on their glove hand side. After fielding the ball, the player takes crow hop and throws to coach or cut off man.
9. Fly/Pop fly ball priorities

Play the outfield as if there are no infielders. You want your outfielders to track down every ball they possibly can and not rely on an infielder to make a catch that they should be making moving forward. It's important that players understand who has priority when there is a pop or fly ball. A key to determine where to throw the ball is to throw at the lead runner when the ball is hit right at you and to the trail runner when the ball is hit to your side. When practicing infield/outfield drills, spend 10-15 minutes simulating various situations, for example, fly balls to right-center or left-center, pop flies in shallow center, pop flies in the infield, etc. Also, explain the hierarchy, as follows:

- Not only is your center fielder the “captain” of the outfield, but he also has priority over all other positions in the field. Teach your center fielder to take control, and if he can catch a fly ball or pop fly in right, left or shallow center, he should call all other players off.

- Outfielders have priority over infielders. On balls hit to the shallow outfield, instruct your outfielders to call off infielders (it's easier to make a catch running as opposed to running back), but only if they think they can make the catch.
- Your shortstop is the captain of the infield and should call off all other fielders, provided of course he has the ability to make the catch.

Coach's note: As soon as one infielder calls for a catch, all other infielders should be taught to run to cover their respective bases.

- The shortstop and second baseman have priority on pop flies behind third and first base, respectively. It is much easier for a shortstop or second baseman to catch a ball running to his left (e.g., into shallow right field) or his right (e.g., into shallow left field) than it is for a third or first baseman trying to catch a ball over their shoulder. Also, remind the shortstop or second baseman that outfielders have priority.
- The third or first baseman have priority on short pop flies between them and the catch in fair or foul territory. Again, it's much easier to make a catch running in than it is running back.
- For pop flies around home plate (fair or foul territory), teach your catchers to turn with their backs facing the infield and to take a couple of steps back. This type of pop fly will naturally drift towards fair territory, so using this technique will increase the likelihood that the ball will be caught.

Coach's note: On pop fly foul balls by left-handed batters, teach catchers to look over their left shoulder first. Left-handed batters will rarely hit a pop fly ball to the first base side in foul territory. If a right-handed batter hits a pop foul ball, catchers should look over their right shoulder first.

When practicing these drills, get the players to form a habit of either calling for the ball ("I got it, I got it!") or "acknowledging" that a teammate is clear to catch the ball that they have called for ("you, you, you!"). Players fielding fly balls should also waive off their teammates.

Catcher Drills

1. Ramp Drill – Since we want our catcher to have their glove rise as it catches a pitch, we want the catcher to get a feel for the motion. If you have access to a small ramp that is about 2 feet wide and 8 inches tall, set it in front of the catcher. They start with their glove at the bottom and push it up the ramp as they go to catch the ball. If you do not have access to a ramp, have a ball between their feet and in front of their glove. The catcher pushes the ball away from them as the pitch comes toward them. This allows the glove to move forward and rise toward the ball.
2. Drop Zone – A coach stands behind the catcher and drops a ball. The catcher should have their glove down, let the ball bounce, and then catch it on the way up.
3. Six Shooter – Have a coach stand about 10 feet in front of the catcher. They will have 3 balls in each hand. This is a rapid-fire drill where the catcher will scoop catch the ball and then drop it instantly and get ready for the next one.
4. Bounce and Follow – Here a coach will be about 10 feet in front of the catcher. They will toss a ball in the dirt that the catcher has to block, then the catcher will pop back up into stance and the coach will toss a good one. Add variation by tossing good then back or add a third pitch, etc.

5. Sweeper – While the catcher is in a good crouch, they will sweep their glove back and forth in front of them as they wait for the pitch. They will also have a glove on their head, to keep their head balanced. This can be done off a machine, with a coach, or live pitchers.
6. 90's Receiving – The catcher will start facing 90° to the left or right and then pop to square with their glove low and scoop to catch the ball.
7. 180 Receiving – Have the catcher face backward and flip their feet to square up and scoop catch a pitch.
8. Pop Ups – Have the catcher start lying on their belly. They need to pop up to their catching position and then receive a pitch.
9. Blocking – Have the catcher start on their knees with their glove up. The coach will be about 10 feet away and throw a pitch in the dirt for them to block. Be sure the catcher flips their glove upside down and does not try to catch it. They are trying to block it with their body.
10. Rice Crispies – Coach stands in front of catcher and throws a ball hard in the dirt. Catcher drops down, blocks it, then pops up, grabs it, and gets into a throwing position.
11. Pop up Block – The catcher starts on his belly, pops up, coach tosses a ball in the dirt, he blocks it, pops up, grabs ball and get into throwing position.
12. Verbal – Many of the same drills above can be done by making the catcher throw to a base by verbalizing 1, 2, or 3 as they block the ball. You can have nets set up for them to toss into if you do not have enough players to use as infielders.

Base Running Drills

1. Lead Offs – This needs to be a team identity where everyone on the team does the same things when they get on. You want the opposition to fear every runner and not know when they are going to steal or not. Never take lead until the pitcher is on the rubber and be capable of taking the lead while looking at the pitcher. All runners should be hunting the balls in the dirt and look to advance when ever they can. The key thing is to be landing on your last shuffle as the ball enters the hitting zone. Be sure to deepen your lead with two outs.
 - a. Practice the primary lead. This is a left, right, shuffle, shuffle. Player should be around 8-10 feet off the bag and in an athletic position.
 - b. Secondary leads are an additional couple shuffles after the pitcher lifts and goes home with the ball.
 - c. Have a coach stand in front of the runner and point left (secondary lead and run), both hands up (line drive – shuffle, plant, and get back or right (dive to back half of base)
2. Straight through first - The objective is to teach players the proper way to run to first base on a groundball to the infield. Line the players up a home base. Simulate a ground ball hit in the infield. Instruct players to find the ball within the first few strides towards first base then keep head down as they run through the base (looking for the ball slows them down). Discourage sliding into or lunging towards first base bag. Players should practice stepping on the home-plate side of first base (i.e., not the middle or back portion of the bag) to improve speed to bag and reduce injury.
3. The question mark - The objective is to teach players to identify when a batted ground ball makes it through the infield and to make the proper turn towards and through first

base. Line the players up a home base. Simulate a ground ball hit in the infield. Instruct players to find the ball within the first few strides towards first base (they are still on the first base line at this point). When they see the ball has made it through the infield, they initiate a turn and proceed to and through first base. The resulting running path should resemble a question mark. Emphasize stepping on the corner of the bag facing the inner-diamond and taking short choppy steps after they pass the bag. Players should keep their feet moving so if the outfielder bobbles the ball, they are prepared to take the extra base. If ball is fielded cleanly, instruct players to quickly return to first base.

4. The banana - The objective is to teach players how to exit the batter's box properly on a clean base hit (or fly ball to the outfield), and to make the proper turn towards and through first base. Line the players up a home base. Simulate a base hit to the outfield. Instruct players to exit the batter's box at a 45-degree angle in foul territory then begin making turn towards inner part of the first base bag. The resulting running path should resemble the shape of a banana. Emphasize stepping on the corner of the bag facing the inner-diamond and taking short choppy steps after they pass the bag. Players should keep their feet moving so if the outfielder bobbles the ball, they are prepared to take the extra base. If ball is fielded cleanly, instruct players to quickly return to first base.
5. First to third - This drill teaches players running from first base how to "pick up" the third base coach on a base hit to the outfield, and to make the proper turn around second base. Line the players up at first base and place a coach in the third base coach's box. Simulate a base hit. Instruct players to run hard and pick up the third base coach approximately half to two-thirds of the way to second base. The third base coach either waves (windmill motion) the player to third or holds (both arms up, palms facing out) the player at second. If the player sees that he is being waved to third, he should begin making a slight turn and step on the corner of the bag facing the inner diamond.
6. Second to home - This drill teaches players running from second to home how to pick up the third base coach on a base hit to the outfield, and to make the proper turn around third base. Line the players up at second base and place a coach in the third base coach's box. Simulate a base hit. Instruct players to run hard and pick up the third base immediately. The third base coach either waves (windmill motion) the player home or holds (both arms up, palms facing out, player makes the turn around third; or pointing to the bag, indicating player should stop on the bag) the player at third. Again, player should make the proper turn and step on the corner of the bag facing the inner diamond.

Note to third base coaches: If you want the player to advance home or at least make the turn, leave the coach's box and position yourself one-third or halfway to home (in foul territory). If you want the player to stop on third base, remain in coach's box and point to the bag with one hand and with the other, hold up indicating player should stop. Also, never touch the player as he is rounding the bag.

7. Diamond relay - This is a fun drill, but it also teaches players how to make the proper turns around the bases, including stepping on the right part of the bag (see drills above). Split the players up into teams of two. Half of the players go to second base, and the other half remains at home plate. At "go" players begin to sprint around the bases. After they've completed their tour around the bases, they tag the next player in line, relay style. First team to complete the relay wins.

Hitting and Situations

1. Soft toss - Position player perpendicular to and approximately 2-3 yards away from fence or batting cage screen. If possible, use a portable home plate so the player knows where to stand in relation to the plate. The coach takes a knee and positions himself approximately 2-3 yards from the player and at a 45-degree angle from the player's mid-section. The coach proceeds to underhand ("soft toss") tennis or whiffle balls towards the player's mid-section. The player hits the ball into the fence or screen. Reinforce all the basic hitting fundamentals during this drill, for example, proper stance, hand positioning, weight shift, stride, swing plane, and hitting the top half of ball. Teach the players how to time the toss. For example, lowering your hand before the toss is similar to a pitcher breaking his hands before a pitch, in which case the player should begin his weight shift and stride. For older or more advanced players, toss the ball higher (player must still wait for ball to drop down to mid-section) so the player learns to keep hands and weight back, or with more velocity towards his mid-section so he is forced to make a quicker swing ("throw your hands").
2. Load and Stride – Use bullpen session to help get hitters their timing for the load and stride. They should be able to stand in the batters box with a helmet and bat. They will NOT swing, rather just get their back leg loaded and then stride so they are loaded as the ball is getting to the front of the plate.
3. Whiffle circle - Arrange players in one to two circles and pitch whiffle balls from one knee. Continue to focus on mechanics (proper stance, hand positioning, weight shift, stride, swing plane, and hitting the top half of ball) and introduce concepts of timing and tempo for more advanced players (e.g., they begin stride as you bring arm back in throwing motion). Players should be in "ready" position while waiting (no swinging!). Pitch three to four balls to one player then move on to the next. Ask parents to help collect balls and keep kids separated.
4. Four, four and four - This drill is a combination of batting practice and situations. Break teams up into three teams of four, or three, if necessary. Also, attempt to evenly distribute your skilled players amongst the teams. One team takes batting practice while the other two teams take positions in the field. Throw five to six pitches to each player and on the last one, have the player "run it out" and the fielders make the play. Proceed until the batting team has made three outs. Rotate teams, and the team with the most runs (or hits) wins.
5. Batting Cage – Here are some drills that can be used in the batting cage or during BP
 - a. Two Plate Drill – have two plates set out. Batter takes one swing from first plate then needs to adjust his timing with two swings from the back plate. You can change the pattern of this to back, front, back and any other combination. Be sure the batter is set and in their ready position before the ball comes each time but do encourage them to do it in a timely fashion. This will replicate off-speed pitches being thrown during an at bat. Really looking to avoid grounds to the middle of the diamond. Line drives over the middle infielders are optimal.

- b. Tee Drills – First, be sure you start with the tee in front of the plate. We want to train our hitters to hit the ball out front. Start with some well-balanced swings. This means a slight movement back, small stride, contact, and finish. Add in these pre-swing movements to force the player to get back into load position. Two-foot bounce, one knee up, Flamingo, step back, and Happy Gilmore. You can also do all of these with soft toss, front toss, or BP

Pitching Drills

1. Turn and Separate – If your pitchers are having trouble with their arm motion, try this one. Have them hold the ball in the fingertips pointed up, toss it up, catch it with their fingertips pointed down, and immediately go through the throwing motion. It should force them to make a more efficient motion.
2. Head Tilt Drill – In order to keep pitchers from having too much head movement, have them play catch or pitch with a glove on their head. This should help keep their head stable and eyes on target as they develop their accuracy.
3. Towel Drill – have players partner up. One player is the pitcher with a towel in their hand and the other player is a target. The target starts close and slowly moves back as the drill goes on. The player with the towel will go through the throwing motion with a snap to finish. They are snapping the towel at your partners extended glove. Slowly start to extend yourself to your maximum extension while keeping solid mechanics.
4. Step offs – In this drill you will need a catcher, a first basemen and a runner. The catcher will give a sign to the pitcher of either throw over or fastball. If it is a throw over, the pitcher will step off and attempt a pick off play at first. Runner can work on their lead off skills and how to get back into the bag. Always slide to the back corner of the bag. The first basemen can work on their footwork and positioning. They should be in a straddle position of the bag where they can catch and tag in one motion or step off and defend. The catcher can work on their throw down to first base if the pitch comes home.
5. Scarecrow – Here pitchers will work on their form by raising their lead leg, separating their throwing arm from the glove, and holding the position like a scarecrow with one leg in the air and both arms elevated at shoulder height. They will then deliver the pitch, emphasizing the lead hip driving toward the target.
6. Targets – In this drill you will need a catcher. The pitcher will work on throwing each of their pitches to the 4 quadrants of the plate. They emphasis is keeping it out of the middle of the strike zone. Have a competition of how many pitches it takes to hit all 4 corners of the zone. Having an umpire is also a good idea. It gives players an idea of what a strike looks like and what is out of the zone. It also allows them to understand how difficult it is to umpire.

Basic Mechanics

Hitting

- Balance, balance, balance and timing, timing, timing
- Hit the ball before it gets to the plate (catch it in front)
- Feet a little more than shoulder width
- Knees slightly bent with 65% of weight on back leg and heels slightly wider than toes
- Bat held with the knob pointing at the opposite batters box
- Hands at shoulder height
- You should see a triangle created by the back hand, back shoulder, and back elbow
- Both eyes on the pitcher/ball
- Stride towards the pitcher with a soft, slow, straight, short, and shallow step
- Have the hand come through the inside of the baseball before the barrel of the bat
- Hitter is trying to hit the inside of the baseball
- Hands stay tight to the body with initial movement because you can twist faster with hands in.
- Less leg kick is always better. Power comes with size and bat speed, but accuracy is a result of calm and easy swings. It is hard to do this with a big leg kick.

Pitching

- Balance, balance, balance
- A pitcher should have their foot parallel with the rubber, not heel on or toe on. It is more deceiving if your pivot foot is more on the arm side of the rubber.
- Hands in the glove with a four-seam grip and held between your belly button and your chin.
- Lift front leg until your thigh is at least parallel with the ground. As leg lifts, so does your hands.
- As the stride starts, your hands separate with the ball moving down, around, and up.
- Once in a loaded position, your trigger is when the stride leg hits the ground. At this point the ball starts to move forward toward the catcher.
- Your glove hand will move through a motion toward the catcher first and follow through into your side.
- Your throwing hand will make the same motion and finish on the opposite thigh.
- You want your back side leading the way as you stride towards the plate.
- Your weight should be more on your heel than your toe when you are on the rubber and loaded up. To help keep your weight over your heel, you can get your pitchers to have a

SLIGHT head tilt away from the plate. Do not let them exaggerate this as it will get them off balance.

- You want to avoid drifting towards the plate before your arm has had a chance to get through its motion. You want to look for the throwing hand to be high as the front foot contacts the ground.
- Stride foot should land pointed slightly in, not directly at the plate.
- Your knee should lift to at least belly button. Higher is only better if the pitcher can stay on balance.
- The hip motion towards the plate should begin with the lead hip driving towards the plate.
- Your pitcher can use either the drop or the pump. With younger pitchers, less movement is better, so the drop is probably better. The drop has the glove start at the abdomen and rise to the chin before the hand separates and drops while the pump has the glove rise above the head before it comes back down to the separation phase.
- Location – Your pitch location is determined by both your front shoulder and your back shoulder. You want to stand behind your pitchers to be able to see what direction their front shoulder(glove side) points when the pitchers body starts toward the plate and then what direction their back shoulder(arm side) is pointing when they are finished their delivery. Both should be aimed at the plate. Get players to hold their finish and then see how their back shoulder will always line up with where their pitch ends up.

Throwing

- Once the ball is in your glove, get it to chest height and get the ball in hand, preferably with a 4 seam-grip
- Bring the throwing hand out of the glove with a slight downward motion, pulling the ball back behind the head with the arm bent at 90° and the ball facing away from the target
- Be sure to step toward the target with a stride or crow hop to gain momentum and accuracy
- The glove hand will lead the way towards the target with the throwing hand following after

Catching

- Catcher needs to be in a balanced squatted position
- Glove hand is held out as a target at the bottom of the zone or below the zone
- Throwing hand is held behind the catcher to protect it from foul balls
- Wrist is loose, and as the ball is coming in, the glove drops and motions in an upward path to catch the ball
- When giving signs to the pitcher, be sure to have your hands close to your body

First Base

- Need to defend the triangle. Your key area is the triangle between the pitcher, the catcher, and first base.
- Your basic starting position is 12 feet behind the base and 8 feet towards the infield. This will allow time to get to the base before the runner so you can receive the ball.

