

BASIC PITCHING MECHANICS

BY

JENNIE BISHKO

Pitching Fundamentals

1. How to hold the ball – C, horseshoe, seams, 4 seam rotation (inside/outside)
2. Feet placement – balanced, shoulder width w/one foot forward, even weight distribution, both on mound
3. Presentation – ball in hand, stand tall, 2 or 3 second pause, shoulders back, relaxed
4. Motion
 - 3 Step Process
 - Step #1 = Presentation of the ball
 - Step #2 = Getting open/X position
 - Step #3 = Getting closed/Release/Follow Thru

Pitching Mechanics – Key Words

- A. Balance – stay smooth throughout the entire motion – everything at the same pace – ex. Fingers
- B. Reach – make a straight arc and reach with both arms
- C. Stride – different for each individual – try to maximize with leg drive
- D. Getting Open – into an X position – entire body (except for the eyes) will face the 3B if right handed
- E. Foot placement – at a 45 degree angle on a straight line or to the left a little bit – NEVER cross that line
- F. Cocked wrist – back of fingers, wrinkle, point ball at 2nd base
- G. Keep your throwing arm outside of your ear – test it by looking straight ahead – should see the whole ball
- H. Opposition – using both arms to gain power – reach & pull
- I. Glove Hand – high in an X position and pointed at the target
- J. Alley – keep it tight – as close to your belly button as possible
- K. Wrist Snap/Release – always at the hip – snap & touch
- L. Closing the back leg – kick back & go – similar to a bowling follow through with less emphasis on kick back
- M. Follow Thru – keep it close – finish at the shoulder
- N. Defensive Position – getting closed in order to defend yourself
- O. Leg Drive – stepping vs. driving
- P. Weight Distribution – touch & go – stay light on your toes

Beginning Drills

1. Wrist Snaps – from X position (5 feet away)
 - Check foot placement, wrist cocked, glove hand, weight distribution, shoulders level
 - Focus – snapping at the hip, 4 seam rotation, follow thru, opposition, smoothness of motion
2. (L) Position Or (T) Position (10 – 15 feet away)
 - Same drill as above with more momentum from arms (opposition) and wrist snap.
 - Add the leg drag & close once the pitcher feels comfortable and has some accuracy.
3. X Position Drill (20 feet away)
 - Getting even more momentum from opposition. Really focus on glove hand and wrist snap.
 - The leg follow thru and finish becomes even more important as they begin to throw harder.
4. Clockwise Arc – from the X position with the arms relaxed in front (20 feet away)
 - Same drill as the X drill, except the pitcher starts with her hands by her thigh. She will move her arms into the X position instead of starting there. The rest of the motion stays the same.
 - Same progression as the above drills. Add the follow thru with legs when ready.
5. Long distance throwing (5 – 7 feet beyond the normal pitching distance)
 - Focus is on feeling your motion. Pay close attention to the mechanics.
 - Do only 5 – 10 of these
6. Full motion (35 – 40 feet away)
 - mechanics are so important at this level. They want to be able to go thru all 3 steps while staying smooth and balanced. Some accuracy is wanted, but throwing strikes is not important. It will take a beginning pitcher about 10,000 pitches before she locates her follow thru on a consistent basis.

Things to Remember

1. Every pitch must be thrown with 100% effort. (Speed vs. Accuracy)
2. Without practice and repetition, no one will ever get any better.
 - * Mirror Work
 - * Balled up socks
 - * Incrediballs
 - * Tape on a wall
 - * Throw through a tire
 - * Nerf ball

3. Throwing strikes is not important. Throwing straight is. Expect the ball to be too high or too low.
4. Don't allow a pitcher to pitch past the frustration level. Move on and come back.
5. Always try to have the catcher in a squat position for a low target. (Sitting on a bucket is acceptable.)
6. Have the pitcher freeze after a pitch if she is struggling. This will allow her a chance to check her mechanics. Mechanics should be paid attention to during every workout!!!
7. Never let a pitcher struggle from full distance. Always move her up or put her into drill work and then let her work herself back into full motion.
8. Always make sure that individual is willing and able to put in a lot of time practicing and committing herself to improvement. It takes a very mentally strong and devoted individual to learn how to pitch.
9. Give a lot of **constructive** criticism, but even more positive feedback and praise. Always make them strive to make the next pitch better than the previous one.
10. HAVE FUN!!!

Extras = Using 18" balls for spins; strengthening wrists, forearms, legs, and fingers (squeezing a tension ball)

PITCHING WORKOUTS

By
Jennie Bishko

1. Make sure that you are getting properly warmed up every time before you begin pitching.
 - A. Stretch your arms & your legs thoroughly. You can never do enough stretching. Keeping the muscles flexible is very beneficial to any athlete and it also helps to prevent injuries.
 1. Quads
 2. Hamstrings
 3. Upper/Lower Back
 4. Forearms
 5. Shoulders
 6. Rotator Cuffs
 7. Hip Flexors
 8. Calves
 9. Biceps/Triceps
 10. Groin
 11. Ankles
 12. Neck
 13. Wrists
2. Establish a pattern.
 - It is important that each individual establishes her own pattern that she feels comfortable with. Every pitcher has their own style of throwing and most pitchers will have their own pattern for warming up.
 - Example *
 - Stretch & Jog
 - Warm Up overhand for 3-5 minutes
 - Wrist Snap Drill x 20
 - Short Distance Drills x 20
 - X Position Drill x 25
 - Long Distance throwing x 8
 - Full Motion Warm Up x 15
 - From this point on, the warm up is considered over, and the pitcher is ready to move into her workout.
 - Workouts can vary daily. However, always make sure that when the workout is completed, the pitcher cools down easily throwing overhand x 15-20 throws.
3. Workout Drills
 - A. For beginning pitchers or pitchers with continuous control problems, the beginning drills discussed during the basic mechanics section are good to use on a daily basis. Even if the pitcher has success with consistency, it is important for her to do these drills as part of her warm up every time. However, if a pitcher is really struggling from distance, have her come up close to correct her mechanical problems and then move her back.

- B. The beginning drills are designed to incorporate small parts of the mechanics until full motion is reached where the pitching becomes more automatic. Repetition in pitching is very important. Drills need to be completed in order for the correct mechanics to be executed with little thought. These drills also serve as a great warm up. Remember: pitching is all about muscle memory.
- C. Variations to Beginning Drills – these drills can be used on a regular basis or to vary pitching workouts. It is very important that the pitchers have a chance to vary their actual workouts. Doing the same thing daily can get very boring. This can cause them to have a relaxed attitude and form bad habits. Here are some drills that still work the mechanics, but allow the pitchers to work on specific areas of their motion as well as challenging them during their workouts.
1. Wrist snap drills using 18” balls or small Nerf footballs. Goal = Correct rotation.
 2. Pitching with your eyes closed. Working on throwing to different targets and feeling the correct mechanics. Visualize strikes with your mind, sight target, and throw.
 3. Target work. Set up inside and have them hit five in a row. Move the targets around so that they get plenty of work at each location. Make it a challenge for them. You can do this with any pitch and set up any goal that is realistic.
 4. Long distance throwing. This is a drill to do after they have completely warmed up. Focus on leg drive, wrist snap, and follow thru. This is a good drill to incorporate daily.
 5. Batter situations. Set up a sheet with situations where the catcher and the pitcher work together against a make believe batter. Example: 3rd batter, lefty. Have them keep an actual count while charting how they pitched the batter. This is for pitchers who have good control.
 6. Game situations. This is where they warm up and then structure their workout like a game situation. Have them throw an inning at a time and switch off with another pitcher. Have each pitcher chart for the other pitcher. The idea is to get ahead in the count and try to hit as many pitches as possible. See who is most consistent, who gets ahead, etc. Again, this drill is for a pitcher who is a little bit more advanced and has good control.
 7. Set up a target that they have to throw into. Even if it is a turned over bucket on a chair or a tire hanging from a rope. Set up a point system

where they are challenged to be as accurate as possible. This can be done with just a catcher target also. Balloons?

8. Leg drive – see how far out each pitcher can get using their legs. Mark each spot with some tape and their name. Do this periodically to check improvement, or do it as a contest.
- Every one of these drills can be modified or completely changed to fit the needs of an individual pitcher or any circumstance. The important thing is that they learn to challenge themselves and think for themselves. Pitching is 90% mental, 5% talent, & 5% luck. If a pitcher is not willing to think and make constant adjustments, then her progress is going to be slow until it completely stops.
 - Drill work is good as long as the pitchers and the catchers are constantly focusing on mechanics. Make sure that you stress to the pitcher that quality is much more important than quantity. A good workout is not judged by how long you throw or how many pitches are thrown, but by how hard you worked while you were throwing. Every pitch must be the maximum!!

**Karen Linder
Kent State University**

HITTING

Keys To Hitting

1. Proper mental state – confident, relaxed, clear head, focused
2. Vision and focus – on pitcher's release point, see the ball
3. Proper hitting mechanics
4. Timing combined with quick, explosive, powerful movements

Hitting Mechanics

A. Head

1. Head and eyes still and level
2. Focal point

B. Lower Body

1. stance – use a center line to help teach
2. load
3. stride
4. pivot

C. Upper Body

1. grip and bat position – middle knuckles aligned, grip upside down v, elbows, down, bat 45 degree angle by ear, wrists and fingers relaxed
2. load or trigger
3. swing – 3 phases
 - a) pivot – point knob
 - b) arm extension to contact – arms extend taking barrel to contact
 - 1) lead arm pulls in direction of pitch
 - 2) back arm – throws barrel
 - c) follow through – drive through

D. Pitch Locations and Contact Points

1. inside – out in front of inside corner
2. middle – slightly out in front of middle of the plate
3. outside – on the outside corner
4. high
5. belt high, middle
6. low

E. Power

1. quick, strong, explosive synchronization of feet, hips, arms, and wrists
2. arm extension and follow through

HITTING DRILLS

A. Dry Swings

1. hip rotations and point knob – 9 spots
2. swing to contact, follow through
3. already pivoted and swing through
4. partner resistance
5. full cuts – 9 spots
6. 1 arm swings
7. quick swings
8. swing against wall or net
9. broom
10. ball by back foot – pivots
11. throw ball in and out – work on pivots, hand position, and where ball should go
12. mirror swings

B. Tee Drills

Use softballs, baseballs, basketballs, tennis balls, softie balls, golf wiffle balls, others. Work 9 spots or whatever spots you choose.

1. 1 knee drills
 - a. 1 arm with small bat or stick – front arm, back arm
 - b. mallet
2. call out steps – ready, load, pivot, extend to contact, follow through
3. go to contact, stop, drive through – check hand and bat position at contact
4. already pivoted, drive through – works extending through contact
5. full cuts
6. double tees
 - a. ball on front tee – keep bat head up
 - b. ball on both tees – work driving through
 - c. tees set up in and out – call out pitch to hit
7. back arm with small bat or speed stick
8. big ball on tee – drive through
9. slaps
10. eyes closed

C. Soft Toss Drills

Use softballs, baseballs, basketballs, tennis balls, softie balls, golf wiffle balls, others. Tosser must understand pitch location.

1. big ball – drive through
2. softballs, tennis balls, baseballs, golf wiffle balls

3. mix balls
4. stick with small balls
5. 1 arm swings with small bat
6. 2 balls – circle
7. 2 balls at same time – call top or bottom or with 2 colors and call color
8. bounce toss – wait and stay back
9. drop toss – increase bat speed – quicker swing

BUNTING/SLAPPING

A. Keys to Bunting

1. have a positive attitude
2. move up in box
3. bunt only strikes unless suicide
4. start with bat at top of zone
5. drop body not just bat

B. Sacrifice – advance runner

1. pivot
2. split hands or hands together, elbows down, give with the ball

C. Right Drag – use for a hit or advance runner

1. step back
2. bat over top

D. Left Drag – use for a hit

1. footwork – 2 methods
 - a. pivot and cross-over
 - b. step back and cross-over
2. bat head and contact

E. Right Slap – use to drive ball past charging infielders, shorter swing to protect with 2 strikes

1. show bunt, pull back, and $\frac{3}{4}$ swing
2. can slap for control or for power

F. Left Slap – drive ball past charging infielders, person with speed use to hit

1. footwork same as left drag
2. lead with knob and slap

G. Fake Slap/Bunt

1. show bunt, pull back looks like slap, then bunt
2. used to freeze corners

H. Push Bunt

1. Step

2. hands in push out

- I. Bunting Drills

1. walk through with partner
2. ball toss
3. stick and softie balls or golf wiffle balls
4. hoola hoops or target areas
5. move machine in
6. bunt scrimmage

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BASERUNNING

A. Home to first

1. run through the base
 - a. quick first step
 - b. foul territory
 - c. look right
 - d. break down
 - e. reverse pivot
2. make the turn – single
 - a. banana cut
 - b. hit inside corner in stride with right foot
 - c. find the ball – see it
 - 1)go to 2nd
 - 2)come back to the base

B. Extra base hits

1. banana cut
2. hit inside corner

C. Lead-offs

1. rocker
 - a. front of left foot on OF corner of base
 - b. right foot behind base
 - c. first step with right foot prior to release
2. sprint
 - a. heel of either right or left foot on base
 - b. first step with foot on the base as ball is released
3. steals
 - a. sprint and anticipate a slide
4. leads from bases
 - a. from first – body and a half lead
 - b. from second – 2 body lengths at an angle
 - c. from third – body length in foul territory

D. Tag-ups

1. tag using sprint start
 - a. if possible see the ball

- b. say go or stay, do not say “no” because it sounds like “go”
- 2. fly balls
 - a. runner on first
 - 1)go 1/3 ball hit to RF
 - 2)go ½ ball to CF and LF
 - 3)tag-up on balls hit deep to LF, CF, RF
 - b. runner on second
 - 1)go 1/3 ball hit to LF, LC, shallow RC, RF
 - 2)tag-up on balls hit deep to RF, CF
 - c. runner on third – tag on all fly balls

E. Sliding

- 1. bent leg
 - a. lay back with hands up
 - b. lower leg makes initial contact
 - c. use at all bases
- 2. pop-up
 - a. bent leg slide using momentum to push up
 - b. used at second or third if possibility of going to the next base exists
- 3. head first
 - a. head, hands, and fingers up
 - b. forearms and chest make contact
 - c. use at second and third on steals or to dive back to a base, do not use at home
- 4. back door
 - a. slide out to side and flip over touching base with hand
 - b. use at second, third or home if throw is early or on a close play
- 5. teaching progression
 - a. sit on the floor and lay back
 - b. squat and kick out
 - c. hold hands
 - d. hold bat
 - e. walk through
 - f. gym floor with blanket and socks
 - g. slip and slide – water
 - h. run slowly
 - i. full speed

F. Baserunning Drills

- 1. Practice leads on foul line – from first, second, third, go or back, tag-up
- 2. Home through first – break downs and pivots
 - a. relay sprints
- 3. 4 corner sprints – everyone doing the same thing
 - a. hit and run through first

- b. single – make the turn, come back to base
 - c. single – make turn and go
 - d. doubles or 2 bases from hit or lead
 - e. triples or 3 bases from hit or lead
 - f. home runs
4. 4 corners – runners look to coach for directions, use a P motion
 - a. runner at home listen to first base coach
 - b. runners at first, second, and third listen to third base coach
 5. 4 corners – runners are told what to do from each base, us P motion – everyone goes at same time
 - a. runner at home
 - 1) through the base and pivot
 - 2) make the turn and come back
 - b. runner at first
 - 1) lead and go
 - 2) steal third
 - 3) delay steal
 - 4) tag
 - c. runner at second
 - 1) lead and go
 - 2) steal third
 - 3) delay steal
 - 4) tag
 - d. runner at third
 - 1) lead and go
 - 2) tag
 - 3) suicide squeeze
 6. base tag
 7. 4, 3, 2, 1, or 1, 2, 3, 4
 8. relay races
 - a. 4 teams – home runs
 - b. 2 teams – 2 bases

THROWING FUNDAMENTALS & PROGRESSION

By

Kerry Kaser – Assistant Coach
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I. General Comments

- A. always stretch before any type of throwing
- B. find the “C” to create 4 seam rotation
- C. keep ball in fingertips – space should exist between the ball and the palm
- D. enforce proper throwing fundamentals to prevent arm injuries later

II. Throwing Progression

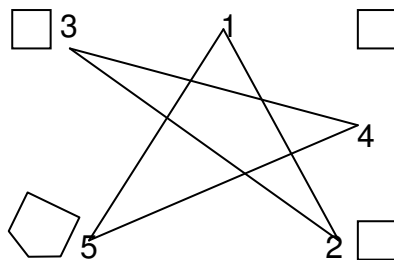
- A. wrist/forearm warm-up (5 – 7 yards apart)
 - 1. make sure players have the “C” seam and ball is in fingertips
 - 2. glove foot slightly in front of throwing foot – good balance
 - 3. place elbow on “table” to the side of the body at 90 degree angle
 - 4. take small step toward target sliding elbow across the “table” – front leg is straight
 - 5. snap wrist and reach out to touch partner
 - 6. follow through on glove side pocket – “bow” to your target
 - 7. nice and easy throw
- B. T/L position (10 – 12 yards apart) ***T” with body – “L” with throwing arm**
 - 1. point glove side shoulder and hip at target
 - head level and focused on target
 - 2. feet shoulder width and one small step apart
 - good balance
 - point toes straight ahead
 - 3. keep elbow at 90 degrees with ball turned away
 - “read the back of hand”
 - 4. glove or glove elbow pointed at target
 - 5. look straight ahead – should see glove and ball in peripheral vision
 - avoid wrapping ball behind head
 - 6. take small step toward target transferring weight from back foot to front foot
 - point throwing toe at target
 - front leg should be straight
 - front half of body directs, back half of body provides power
 - 7. rotate hips and shoulders on a level plane
 - pull glove in toward body
 - 8. keep elbow at or above shoulder level
 - 9. follow through to glove side pocket
 - e.g. major league pitchers

- C. add quick feet with T/L position (10 – 15 yards)
 - 1. quick feet = drop-hop motion with feet
 - 2. receive ball with two hands, knees bent
 - ready to get rid of ball quickly
 - 3. ball is caught, demonstrate quick feet bringing both hands up to throwing ear
 - 4. pause before returning ball to partner
 - close glove shoulder and hip to target
 - read back of hand
 - 5. step and throw
 - IF – short and quick (get rid of ball quickly)
 - OF – “thigh to sky”
- D. put it all together (15 – 20 yards)
 - 1. fluid motion and throws
 - 2. start “turning” it up
 - 3. IF – quick throws focusing on getting rid of ball while maintaining good fundamentals
 - 4. OF – should continue to add distance between partner

III. Throwing drills

A. star drill

- 1. rotate in line OR follow throw to next position

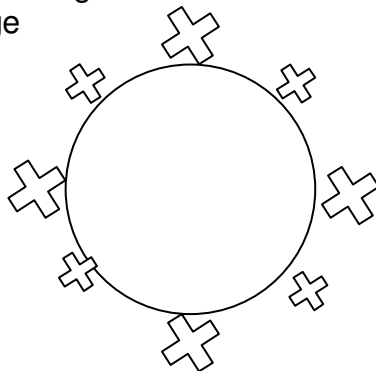


B. target competition

- 1. with partner, move glove to create new targets
- 2. thrower gets a point every time she hits her target
- 3. first partner to 10 wins

C. clock target

- 1. with partner, move glove to create the “main” numbers on the clock – 12, 3, 6, 9
- 2. first partner to work around the clock first, wins
- 3. can add targets in between each “main” numbers for more challenge

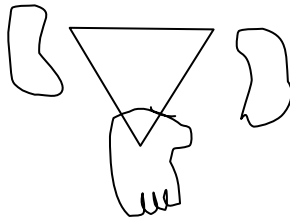


DEFENSIVE FUNDAMENTALS & DRILLS

By Kerry Kaser – Assistant Coach
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- I. General Comments
 - A. balance is key – stay on balls of feet with weight 50/50
 - B. always moving on the field
 - prior to, during and after pitch/play
 - C. starting defensive position depends on position played
 - all defenders need to start with glove out in front of body
 - 1. corners (1st & 3rd) – start low, knees bent, glove near ground
 - less reaction time = starting lower
 - 2. middle infield (SS & 2nd) – start low, knees bent, glove waist high
 - ready to charge, drop, or slide to ball
 - 3. outfielders – start up, knees slightly bent, glove out in front
 - ready to sprint in, back, or to the side pumping arms
 - D. “ball is the prey – you are the predator”

- II. Basic Fielding Fundamentals
 - A. ground ball right at fielder
 - ** always charge if you can (predator attacking its prey) **
 - 1. feet should be wide, but comfortable to the fielder
 - 2. rear end should be down
 - no lazy knees
 - 3. glove and throwing hand draw the letter “U”
 - focus on soft hands – no noise should be heard while fielding
 - “feeding the alligator”
 - 4. create a “triangle” with feet and glove as ball is being fielded



 - 5. field ball bringing it up to bellybutton
 - 6. quick feet to good throwing position
 - throwing elbow up and glove shoulder and hip pointed at target

 - B. ground balls slightly to right or left of fielder
 - ** these are ground balls that don't necessarily require a forehand or backhand approach **
 - 1. keep weight low, shuffle step to right or left depending on what side the ball was hit

- e.g. sitting in a computer desk chair and sliding side to side
 - continue to catch ball out in front of body (maintain the "triangle")
 - 2. demonstrate soft hands
 - 3. quick feet into good throwing position
- C. ground balls requiring forehand or backhand approaches
1. key is creating good angles when approaching ball
 2. drop open to side ball is hit OR pivot to open
 3. cross over at an angle with head and eyes remaining on ball
 4. stay low and reach for ball with fingers down
 - get glove dirty
 - focus on watching ball all the way into glove
 5. quickly get into good throwing position
 - forehand – really focus on completing quick feet and closing off front should and hip
 - backhand – after fielding, plant majority of weight on throwing foot and throw weight forward to add power to throw

III. Infield Fundamental Drills

- A. Short hops with partner and glove
- keys - tell partner to throw ball like "skipping a stone on water", throw ball right in front of partners toes, hands out in front
 - focus - moving and staying on balls of feet, soft hands, getting into a good throwing position
 - variations - no glove with softie balls, glove with softie balls, glove with baseballs, glove with softballs.
- B. Roll side to side with partner and **no** glove (create alligator mouth)
- keys - roll the balls 1-3 steps right or left of the fielder, rapid rolling
 - focus - staying low, watching ball into soft hands, quick shuffles right and left
 - variations - no glove with baseballs/glove with baseballs/glove with softballs
- C. 1 knee forehand/backhand with partner and glove
- keys - back need down, roll ball hard enough that the fielder doesn't have to stab at the ball, roll ball out in front of the fielder's foot
 - focus - isolating the actual fielding of the forehand and backhand, soft hands, bringing glove and ball up to the throwing ear
 - variations - glove with baseballs, no glove with softie balls
- D. Cross over forehand/backhand with partner and glove
- keys - have partner tell fielder to open or pivot before rolling the ball

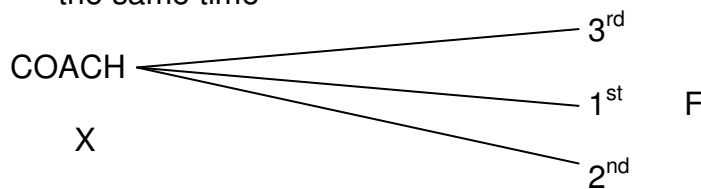
- focus - staying low, watching ball, working angles, quick first step, getting into a good throwing position
- variations - glove with baseballs, mix forehands and backhands to work reactions

E. 4 corners

- keys - communication with other players in square
- focus - staying low, staying on balls of feet, watching ball into glove, maintain good fielding triangle, getting into good throwing position
- variations - moving clockwise, field rolling grounder and get into good throwing position/moving counter-clockwise, field rolling grounder and jump into quick feet and good throwing position/roll, flip/short hops into quick feet into good throwing position

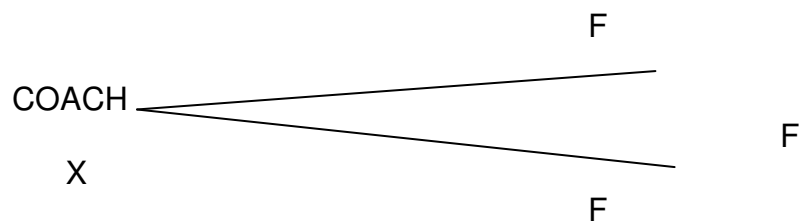
F. Rapid fire (take 10 and rotate)

- keys - constantly moving feet, hitter is approximately 10 yards away from fielder
- focus - seeing ball off of bat, maintaining good fielding technique, try to get ball into middle of body if possible, quick feet into good throwing position, good throws back
- variations - use softie balls with no gloves straight on/work forehands then backhands/work forehands and backhands at the same time



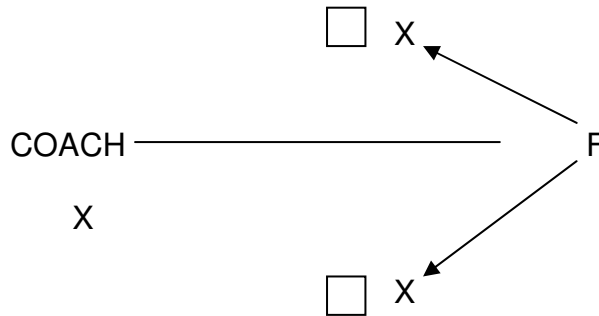
G. Triangle rapid fire

- keys - put closer corner players approximately 15 yards apart with the deep middle infielder approximately 7 yards behind the corners, hit in gaps of triangle, work corners close and middle infielders in the back, communication with other players in triangle
- focus - seeing ball off of bat, moving feet, getting into back up position if necessary, good fielding technique, quick feet into good throwing position, good throws back
- variations - use softie balls with no gloves/hit pop ups between defensive players



H. Alternate rapid fire

- keys - set out two bases for two players to receive throws from fielder, hitter is approximately 15 yards apart
- focus - proper fielding technique, quick feet, alternate good throw to designated base, communication between fielder and receiver



IV. Outfield Fundamental Drills

A. Self toss & partner roll (can be done after throwing warm-up)

- keys - make sure players are fully warmed up to make throws, partner rolls ball hard enough to partner during ground balls
- focus - calling ball at peak, "dancing" prior to catch, glove foot on catch, good crow hop into good throwing position/calling ground balls, glove foot on run through, good throws to partner/down and block both ways, up quick into good throwing position, good throws to partner

B. Crow hops & throws into fence

- keys - pair outfielders together, player laying on the ground needs to be on their stomachs with head down
- focus - glove foot receiving of fly ball, working proper crow hop footwork, closing front should, hitting target on net or fence, grabbing grass on follow through of throw
- variations - put players into groups of three so that they can hit target of third person/toss ball to self

C. Rapid drop steps

- keys - each player has a ball, coach tosses ball, start OF approximately 5 yards from tosser, alternate left drop with right drop
- focus - quick first step in direction of ball, sprinting with glove down, reaching at last possible moment to catch ball, calling ball at peak, quick feet into good throwing position
- variations - no gloves with softie balls/no gloves with baseballs/no gloves with regular softballs/can use with IF

D. Shoe strings

- keys - coach kneels to toss realistic shoe string catches, toss off to the side to avoid collision

- focus - sprinting with glove down, staying low as you approach the catch, *try* to call ball, slide back of glove on ground
- variations - no glove with softie balls/no glove with tennis ball/create a contest/coach bounce shoe string/can use with IF

E. Getting behind fly balls

- keys - coach can hit or throw fly balls to OF, hit high enough for OF to get to point, next OF in line are "eyes" for fielding OF
- focus - sprinting to specific point before coming back in on ball, crow hop, good throw
- variations - no gloves with softie balls/no gloves with baseballs/gloves with baseballs

F. Line drives

- keys - each player has a ball, throws into coach, starts sprint
- focus - good angles, sprint with glove down, reach to make catch, *try* to make call on ball
- variations - short bloop hits/can use with IF

G. Communication fly/ground balls

- keys - put OF into two groups (FR & CF or LF & CF), CF has priority
- focus - constant communication with other players in drill, calling ball at peak, listening versus hearing teammates, echoing teammates, back up positioning
- variations - no gloves with softie balls/move one line in and one line deep and hit ball between two players/combine IF & OF - use IF as the closer line with OF as the deeper line

On a daily basis, let OF know what type of ground ball approach they are to take (run through, down & blocks)

Practice Structure

Keys to a Good Practice

1. Communicate objectives for practice and drills - what do you want your players to learn
2. Keep everyone actively involved -- eliminate standing in line
 - a. walk through fundamentals where everyone does the skill at once
 - b. use circuits or stations to keep kids involved
3. Review and do basic fundamentals every day -- throwing, fielding, hitting, base running, bunting
 - a. use routines in warm-up that emphasize correct techniques
 - b. use a variety of drills to keep interest up
 - c. properly execute repetitions of basic skills
4. Make practice fun and challenging
 - a. use games and competitions
 - b. ask your kids questions to find out what they know -- do they understand the objective of a drill; do they know why they are doing what you are asking them to do?

Practice Should Include

1. Stretching and conditioning
2. Throwing and fielding fundamentals and drills
3. Defensive position work
4. Hitting, bunting, and base running
 - a. skills, drill work
 - b. practice in game like situations
5. Situation work -- offence and defense
 - a. defensive situation work -- coach hits, can do it with or without base runners
 - 1) infield situations
 - a) bunts, hits to infield on ground and fly balls, steals
 - b) specific situations - R on 1, R on 2, R on 3, R on 1 & 2, R on 2 & 3, R on 1 & 3, loaded
 - 2) infield/outfield situation
 - a) fly ball communication
 - b) relays from OF to INF
 - c) specific situations with R on base
 - b. scrimmage - soft toss, short toss, off machine, off pitcher
6. Fun drills and competition
 - a. warm-up or conditioning - tag, base tag, follow the leader, relay races
 - b. make 5 good plays, good throws, or good catches in a row
 - c. make 3 good contacts when hitting in a row
 - d. 1 inning games -- start the inning with different situations -- R on 1 or R on 1 & 3

EXAMPLES OF STATIONS

Offensive stations -- have 4 or 5 kids/station and rotate after 10 minutes

1. bunting
2. dry swings, or swing off tee, or soft toss
3. short toss or machine hitting
4. base running
5. sliding

Defensive stations

1. drop steps and fly balls
2. fly ball communication between 2 or 3 players -- INF and OF or 2 OF
3. OF making throws to infield relay person
4. Ground balls and throws to bases
 - a) right at field and charge ball
 - b) move right or left
5. taking throws at bases -- force outs and tags
6. run downs
7. 4 corner fielding with throws or tosses
8. position work -- 1B, 2B, SS, 3B, C, P, OF

SAMPLE PRACTICE PLAN

Youth League - 2 hour practice with 12 - 15 kids

- 5:00 - 5:10 stretch
- 5:10 - 5:20 throwing progression
- 5:25 - 6:15 station work - 3 groups rotate 15 minutes
- 5:25 -- 5:40 walk through hitting and soft toss or BP with 4 kids
- 5:40 -- 5:55 fielding ground balls and making throws
- 6:00 -- 6:15 fly balls and throwing to relay or base
- 5:40 -- 6:15 pitchers and catchers work on pitching
- 6:15 - 6:30 defense -- players in positions making plays with or without base runners; may cover specific situations -- force outs, R on 1, R on 1 & 2, R on 1, 2, & 3
- 6:30 - 6:50 BP with pitcher -- 1 at bat at a time instead of 5 - 10 hits then next batter
- 6:50 - 7:00 base running -- runners all 4 corners -- singles, leads and go 1 base, leads and go 2 bases, HR

Older kids practice plan -- 2 hour with 18 kids

- 5:00 - 5:15 stretch and agility's
- 5:15 - 6:00 offensive stations -- catchers and pitchers hit first and then go do their pitching workout; tees; soft toss; BP off machine or short toss
- 6:00 - 6:15 throwing progression and fielding fundamentals
- 6:15 - 6:30 defensive situation work or individual position fundamentals

6:30 - 6:50 offense and defense scrimmage or situation work -- use short toss,
machine, or pitcher

6:50 - 7:00 base running and conditioning