

Drill: Fence

Purpose:

Helps develop a "hands inside the ball" swing, especially effective for helping players hit an inside pitch on barrel of the bat.

Equipment:

Bat and helmet; Fence area where a player can swing freely.

Setup:

This drill can be used as a batting practice station.

Execution:

The hitter faces parallel to the fence less than one bat length away. (Make sure the player is not standing where they could strike a fence post with the bat.) Hitter imagines an inside pitch and swings the bat dragging the bat head behind the hands until out in front of the body and then extending the bat head out toward the imaginary ball.

Note: This drill is helpful at every level, but can be especially helpful with young hitters that tend to loop or cast their hands away from their body as they swing.

Drill: Tee

Purpose:

Helps a player effectively work on hitting pitches in all locations.

Equipment:

Bat and helmet; Batting Tee

Setup:

This drill can be used as a batting practice station.

Execution:

Start by placing the ball in the middle of the plate thigh high. Take a few swings.

Move the tee in and forward to simulate an inside pitch. Take a few swings.

Move the ball outside and back to simulate an outside pitch. Take a few swings.

Use the three placements above and this time vary the height of the tee to simulate high and low pitches.

Note: Move the tee to simulate different locations, not the hitter's position in the box. Visualization is important in this drill. Have the hitter look out to where the pitcher would be. Have him imagine a windup and pitch and tracking the ball into the actual location on the tee where he will hit it.

- Another good modification of the Tee Drill is to make it a One Handed Drill.
- Simply have a small bat (T-Ball) or a "Shorty" and have the players choke up and use their left hand only to initiate the swing.
- This helps train the bottom hand to pull inside and through the ball.
- Make sure the bat is held in a proper starting position with Load, Knee Drive and Strong Front side as a player would normally do with 2 hands.
- Use this variation often in your Batting Practice Stations.

Drill: Soft Toss

Purpose:

Helps a player focus on swing fundamentals, great warm up before a game.

Equipment:

Bat and helmet, Baseballs or Wiffle Balls, Hitting Net or a Fence (not optimal but doable), Coach or another player.

Setup:

This drill can be used as a batting practice station or a pre-game warm up. Good idea to also set up some warning cones around this drill so people do not walk too close behind the batter. Always assume that batters will hit the ball over your screen - it should not happen, but it always does.

Execution:

- I usually set 12 - 15 baseballs on the ground for this drill and sit on a bucket about 5 feet away from the batter.
- I try to position myself slightly ahead of the batter, about equal to the plate if one is being used.
- I turn slightly sideways so the batter can see the ball better. I show the batter the ball out in front, then slowly rock my arm back and through for an underhand toss toward the front of the plate.
- The underhand tossing motion is important to help the batter develop the timing of his Load and Step to Toe.
- I try to throw most of the balls toward the front of the plate for "ideal impact" up the middle.
- As the batter progresses, you can throw them slightly more out front for an inside pitch and slightly back for an outside pitch. Careful not to go to too extreme on these, they may hit it where the net ain't.

Do not toss a big softball lob to the batter, the toss should be coming on an upward angle (based on the underhand toss) but should achieve max height at about the hip or thigh - we want them swinging down and through the ball.

❖ **Slice the Apple Drill:**

Players should have one palm up and one palm down at impact, the hands roll over naturally on the follow through, not before.

Using a tee or soft toss, have the player imagine the ball is an apple and they are holding a Sword. The player wants to cut that apple in half, if they roll the hands over too quickly they will splatter the apple with the side of the sword.

If they keep one palm up and one palm down at impact, the leading edge of the sword will cut straight through the apple (do not try this drill with a real sword).

Drill: Short Toss

Purpose:

Helps develop fundamental swing, controlled environment, no fear.

Equipment:

Bat and helmet; Cage or L Screen (younger team coaches probably do not need L Screen), baseballs or wiffles.

Setup:

This drill can be used as a batting practice station or pre-game warm up.

- **Execution:**

- I like to set up at 35 - 40 feet (depending on how my arm is feeling and if it is BP or Scrimmage).

- L Screen is needed for ages 10 and up.

- Firmly toss balls into the strike zone and let the batter hit the pitch. This is a good drill to have the batter focus on hitting the ball the other way "Good Approach".

- You can also move the L Screen closer and toss underhand and make the players focus on hitting the other way or back into the Screen - "Good Approach".

Another fun for the kids use for this drill is to have 3-4 coaches around a bucket of Wiffle balls and the kids spread out around them in a big circle (helmets on). The coaches throw the Wiffles to the players around the horn and the kids try to drill the coaches. Like I said, fun for the kids - just make sure you don't have any of the "never break" small Wiffles, they can leave a mark. This is also a good drill in pre-game warm ups.

Beginning of the year, I start with underhand at close range, then move progressively back until at 40 feet.

Drill: Load (Part 1)

Purpose:

Helps players develop a routine for getting into the box, getting into their stance and loading. Also develops the timing used when loading to start swing.

Equipment:

Bat and helmet.

Setup:

This drill can be done as a group with no bats or a batting practice station.

Execution:

Each player will get the proper grip on the bat and step into an imaginary batter's box (use a glove to simulate a plate).

Each player will take their stance and get ready for the pitch.

Coach will simulate a windup and deliver an imaginary pitch or just call it out initially.

The hitter will work on his load and freeze when he has completed it.

Things to watch for:

- Proper grip.
- Does the player look comfortable and relaxed.
- Are the hands approximately shoulder high to start.
- Is the weight shift enough or too much. Example: Hitter should not be rolling the weight onto the outside of the back foot (too much). Load "into" the back leg, not "on to" the back leg. Weight needs to be felt on the inside of the back foot.
- Is the player wrapping the bat.
- Are the hands going up and back (correct) or are they dropping (incorrect).
- Can the hitter still see well. Sometimes players will turn in their lead shoulder and hip too much, which will cause the head to turn also. When the player freezes, check to see that you can see both eyes.

Have the player repeat the drill, stepping out of the box and getting the sign from the third base coach each time.

Drill: Stride to the Toe (Part 2)

Purpose:

Helps players isolate the stride and understand the important parts of the stride.

Equipment:

Bat and helmet.

Setup:

This drill can be done as a group with no bats or a batting practice station.

Execution:

Each player will get into his stance

The coach will simulate a windup and deliver an imaginary pitch or just call it out initially.

The player will then load, stride to the toe, and then freeze.

Things to watch for:

- Is most of the weight still back. Make sure they are not lunging.
- Are the hands still back.
- Have the hands dropped.
- Is the front foot heel still off the ground.
- Is the body still in the same basic alignment. Sometimes players will bend their knees or bend over during the stride.
- Is the head still at the same height.
- Has the hitter stepped out, rather than straight ahead.

Have the player repeat the drill, stepping out of the box and getting the sign from the third base coach each time.

Drill: Drop and Drive to Ideal Impact (Part 3)

Purpose:

Develops the proper knee drive, hip rotation and good balance.

Equipment:

Bat and helmet.

Setup:

This drill can be done as a group with bats on air or a batting practice station (with a Tee or Soft Toss)

Execution:

After the hitter takes his normal load and stride to the toe, the hitter will focus on Dropping the front heel, Driving the back knee and Pulling the bat into the hitting zone with the bottom hand.

- Paint the mental picture for the hitter: imagine an arrow with the feather end located at your back knee and the arrow head pointed just inside your stride foot. You want to Drive that arrow into the ground. If you simply spin on the back foot or "squish the bug", you are not going to drive that arrow very deep or aggressively into the ground.
- Make sure we are Pulling with the bottom hand to initiate the swing rather than casting the hands away from the body. We want to pull our hands inside the ball which will give us the greatest margin of error in our swing (if early or late) and still be able to hit the ball on the barrel.

You may want to have the hitter do this part of the drill in Slow Motion at the start. Have the player freeze at ideal impact (ball waist high, middle of plate).

Things to look for:

- Player should land on a stiff front leg or a "Strong Front Side". Often a player will naturally bend his front knee in order to keep his balance. We want to make sure the hitter is driving against a Strong Front Side.
- Check for back knee drive and natural pivot of back toe.
- Check for bottom hand pulling the bat through hitting zone.
- Head level should stay consistent through entire drill.
- As hitter reaches ideal impact, arms should extend into "power V" and hips un-coil.

Drill: Simulated Swing (Part 4)

Purpose:

Helps players put it all together and isolate the important parts of the swing.

Equipment:

Bat and helmet.

Setup:

If this drill is done as a group drill, make sure all players have plenty of space and are wearing helmets. For younger players you may want to use a bat on air - as a group drill and then have them use a bat as part of a batting practice station (Tee or Soft Toss).

Execution:

Each player will get into his stance

The coach will simulate a windup and deliver an imaginary pitch or call it out.

The player will load, stride to toe, drop the heel and drive the knee as they swing at an imaginary pitch.

Things to watch for:

- All items from Parts 1-3.
- Is the swing balanced.
- Are the hands leading the bat.
- Is the player extending to ideal impact.
- Is the player hitting against a strong front side.

Have the player repeat the drill, stepping out of the box and getting the sign from the third base coach each time.

Drill: Proper Hand Path / Hands Inside the Ball

Purpose:

Helps players develop proper hand path, keeping hands inside the ball.

Equipment:

Bat, helmet, baseballs/wiffle balls, and screen.

Setup:

Best is used in a Soft Toss (coach/player tosses balls from the side) or Short Toss (coach throws underhand or short overhand from short distance behind a screen).

Execution:

Player will take normal stance and then adjust to a very open stance (45 degrees) with both feet, visualizing the pitcher is between Second and Third Base (RH Batter) or Second and First Base (LH Batter).

Ball is tossed or thrown, Batter must hit the ball up the middle or back at/into the screen.

Batter should not take a step when hitting the ball, wide stance, focus on back knee drive and pulling the bottom hand inside path to the ball with extension/follow through resulting in ball hit up the middle.

- If ball is pulled (not hit into screen) then the Batter is not staying inside the ball or is not getting extension up the middle.
- Batter is probably casting hands or letting top hand dictate the swing path of the barrel.
- Focus on bottom hand pulling the bat, back knee driving against a strong front side and extension through the pitch leading to a line drive up the middle.
- If the ball is weakly hit, the batter may be pulling his hands too far inside on a bad path and cutting across the ball (kind of like slice swing in golf). This drill can help this scenario as well in developing better hand path toward the pitcher but still inside the ball.
- This drill will also help with proper extension toward the pitcher to a Power V at ideal impact.

Drill: Batting Practice

Purpose:

As many good swings as possible with the least amount of standing around time.

Equipment:

Bat and helmet, baseballs, buckets, 3-4 coaches and helpers.

Setup:

For my Batting Practice, I like to have multiple stations and rotate kids through each station at least once.

My typical stations would be Live Arm on the Main Field, Tee into a net, Soft Toss into a net, and a Bunt Station.

This set up would require 1 coach - assuming the kids helped each other on all the stations other than the Live Arm Station. I prefer to control the Live Arm station and thus all stations from here.

Ideally, you would also like to have a coach on the other stations to minimize messing around and maximize instruction and productivity.

On the Coast or Majors Field, you could add another hitting station in the Cage provided you have another coach to pitch.

Execution:

Usually we would have 10 - 12 players at a practice, we like to start with 2 players on the Tee station, 2 players on the Soft Toss into net station, 2 players at the Bunt Station and 4-6 on the Live on the Field BP.

Ideally, I would like to add one more station and have less players on the Live BP or I would add a catcher on the live BP and get them some work on blocking and framing pitches.

If I add another station it would be Live Short Toss in the cage (Coast and Majors) or a Short Toss Wiffle ball station.

Once a player is done hitting at the Live BP on the field and I say rotate, he moves to one of the other stations (determine your own order) which in turn moves one person from each station to the next in the order. The person coming to the Live BP goes into the field to shag balls.

Players will stay at their station until I say rotate (remember that only one person leaves the station at a time, not both).

You could also set it up so that 2 or 4 of your pitchers who need some bullpen work hit first and then grab a catcher and go get some work. I usually like to be part of these bullpen sessions though, so I try to make time for that to happen on its own.

If your numbers are low or you do not have many helpers, you could also have the entire team at the BP Live on field. In this situation, I like to have at least one coach hitting ground balls to the players after each pitch or fly balls to outfielders. If I have nets, I would place them in front of first to protect the first baseman and let him focus on catching ground balls the coach is hitting or I would put one in front of second and practice double plays.

In this situation, I would also like to tell the players what the count is on every pitch.

- I would say 2 - 2 and have them focus on making some contact, protecting the plate or hitting a curve ball.
- I would say it is 3 - 1 or 2 - 0 and have them focus on swinging at their pitch (a fastball), one they can drive.
- I would also like to tell the infielders the situation: turning two, bases loaded, etc.

The main thing I try to avoid is a lot of players standing around looking at their shadows.

Drill: The Power Bat

This drill that will help baseball players learn to develop power in their swing by hitting through a heavier object than a normal 5oz baseball. Training with the Power Bat Drill increases power through the point of contact! For a boxer, that means more of a chance to knock his opponent out. For a baseball player it means more of a chance to knock the ball out of the park!!

Tools you will need:

- A Batting Tee
- A plunger
- A flat soccer or basketball
- A hitting net
- A bat
- A winning attitude

Here is how the program works:



- Place the plunger handle into the batting tee.
- Place the heavy ball onto the plunger
- Execute your normal swing repeatedly

Most players will experience a stutter through the impact zone during their first few swings. By "stutter" I mean the bat will decelerate at the point of impact for a fraction of a second before resuming its speed to the finishing position. The goal of The Power Bat drill is to eliminate this stutter and ultimately achieve a powerful, smooth, efficient swing through the heavy ball. We want to eliminate this deceleration at the point of impact on the heavy ball. Achieving this requires proper technique and explosion through the point of impact.

Study the sequence of photos. Notice the balanced loading, the knob of the bat directing to the ball, the tucked rear elbow, the top hand "up" and bottom hand "down" at (and through) the point of impact, the acceleration "through" the ball and finally, the balanced finish in the swing. I encourage a finish that is shoulder height or lower which tends to promote a flatter path of the barrel through the hitting zone.

* Encourage your player to concentrate on the proper mechanics and not concern himself with launching the ball. Proper mechanics will accelerate the bat head through the heavier ball. The flight path of the ball should be level (or slightly higher than chest high) into the hitting net.

* Power is all about bat speed and solid contact at impact, not the size of the player. This drill will increase the power at impact if it is used on a regular basis. Once your player looks like he is powering through the ball with too much ease you may wish to increase the size and weight of the ball he is striking. Remember to always use a semi-flat ball for this drill.



Drill: Team Soft Toss or Short Toss Scrimmage

Purpose:

Fun quick paced game that allows players the opportunity to play many different positions, get game situational experience, communicate and it is a nice change of pace from the normal practice, practice, practice.

Equipment:

Game equipment, "L" Screen is nice

Setup:

We do not use a kid pitcher in this scenario so you have 8 defensive players. If you have 12 kids, then form 4 person hitting teams as you see fit. If you have less than 12, break it up as needed (3, 3, 4) etc.

You can do this as a Soft Toss Scrimmage - you toss a ball underhand from the side and let the kids hit it or you can do it as a Short Toss Scrimmage.

I prefer the Short Toss Scrimmage - I or another coach throws from about 35-40 feet. I think it gives a better representation of a live arm pitcher they will face in a game.

I usually do not have a screen protecting me at the 8, 9 and 10 year old levels, I will want one at the 11-12 year old level as I started to take some shots at the 10's last year - the kids loved it, I started to get a little gun shy we will say, especially when the sun is going down behind the batter.

Execution:

The name of the game is movement and communication between the defensive players. We play 4 outs per half inning.

I like having a Catcher so we can work on steals, 1st and 3rd situations, rundowns, runner on third situations, dropped third strikes and bunt defense to a certain extent. To speed things up, I like to have the Catcher catch for 2 innings then go to the hitting team.

Give some of the kids that play a lot of outfield a chance at the infield positions and vice versa, move them around but tell them that this is a game scenario. That means no silly base running, intentionally getting into pickles (unless I say to), no goofing around.

With kids that do not play a lot of infield, ask for more communication from those that do: "Jimmy, ground ball to you, throw to second." "Jimmy, ground ball to me, I am going to throw to you at second base, make sure you are covering the base."

After each inning, everyone hustles in to the mound and I pick the next 3-4 players to hit and send the kids to their positions - I look for and expect hustle in and hustle out.

I can also take a minute or two to discuss certain situations that came up in the last inning.

* You could also do this with live pitching but I have found it to be too slow a practice for my liking and sometimes, pitching dominated. If you did do it with live pitching, I would start the count at 2-1 or 3-2 to motivate the hitter to be aggressive or protect and the pitcher to throw strikes. I would only do this with a talented group of 10 year olds (maybe all stars) or with an 11-12 team. In which case, you could also give some kids with developing skills a chance to pitch - I have found solid and surprising pitchers this way.

Drill: Sacrifice Bunt Target Game

Purpose:

This is a fun game that helps players work on sacrifice bunting.

Equipment:

Throw down base, bat, helmet, 4 cones, and a baseball

Setup:

This works as a good station drill during batting practice. It can be run with 3 players or for younger players use 4 players and a coach or parent. Place the throw down base in an area where the group doesn't have to worry about being hit by a stray ball. That will serve as home plate. Place 2 cones on the first base side and 2 cones on the 3rd base side. These will serve as the target for the player bunting the ball. See setup image below.

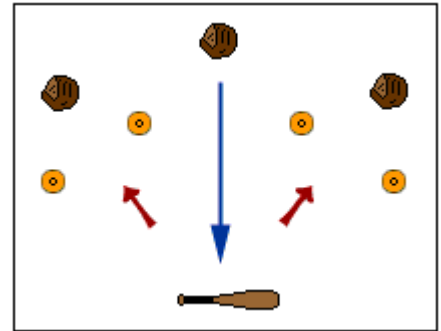
Execution:

One player will bat and gets 10 pitches. The player doesn't have to bunt a bad pitch. 3 fielders are the umpires for strikes and ball.

The player in the middle will act as the pitcher. Have the pitcher take a stretch and throw so the player bunting can work on getting into the proper position as well as bunting.

Each bunt that makes it between the cones is worth a point.

After 10 pitches the players will rotate one position. After all players have had 10 bunts the player with the most points is the winner.



* I like to do this as a hitting station in practice as opposed to a game but may give a "shout out" to the best bunter that day.

* I also would stay away from having a kid pitch in the game scenario listed above, have coach or parent helper do that for you.

Things to watch for:

- * Proper set up by the bunter
- * Proper bat angles to first and third base sides
- * Bunt strikes

Drill: Bunting Stations - 4 Corners

Purpose:

Allows the entire team the opportunity to practice and focus on bunting.

Equipment:

Each base is used as a home plate. Each player will need a glove. Bat, helmet and a couple balls at each station. Cones or baseballs can be used for competitions.

Setup:

This can be a 3 or 4 station drill, a coach or player throwing the pitch, a player bunting, and 2 players fielding. Cones or baseballs can be used to create bunting areas down the lines.

* Best if 4 Coaches or Helpers are available to pitch. I have all Coach Pitchers set up in middle of diamond around the mound area.

* Recommended stations: Sacrifice Bunt toward Third (Home Plate Station), Drag Bunt toward Third (First Base Station), Push Bunt toward First (Second Base Station), Sacrifice Bunt toward First (Third Base Station).

Execution:

Players will take turns rotating within their station. Each player will get a chance to bunt 10 balls. Players should be working on correct bunting fundamentals and trying to bunt the ball down the lines. The field is set up in a way that the foul lines and base lines can be used to determine whether a ball is fair or foul.

After each player has had a chance to go around once or twice, change to a station competition. Each player gets 10 pitches, the player with the most bunts fair and in the bunting area moves on to a final 4 at home plate.



Drill: Skateboard (teaching how to throw)

Purpose:

Teaching how to correctly throw the ball, develop healthy pitching fundamentals.

Equipment:

Gloves and Baseballs

Setup:

Each kid is lined up to play catch with another player opposite them, give room between players.

Execution:

Teaching kids how to throw at an early age is important. Muscle memory works the same for bad mechanics as it does for good - too many bad throws and it starts to seem natural.

I have used this drill with kids ages 6 - 10 and had great success, it is similar to the make a "T" drill that has been around for some time (a few modifications).

Before the drill we talk about how to hold a baseball and show them all the 4 seam grip, have them warm up using this grip and locate all the kids that will need extra help in drill.

Before the drill we also make note of someone's Nike shoes or logo and talk about how that is kind of a good way to think about your arm coming out of the glove before you throw a ball - down and then swoosh back up.

We are going to take the players through this drill step by step, checking their positions at each step and making corrections. The kids are facing each other to start:

Step 1: Coach shows them how the drill will work, demonstrating what each verbal command means.

Step 2: Coach says, "Skateboard" - kid with ball jumps on a Skateboard so he is now facing sideways with ball and glove at chest level.

Checkpoints: Ball in glove with a 4 seam grip, shoulders square to target, feet shoulder width apart

Step 3: Coach says, "Nike Swoosh to Throwing Position"

- Kid with ball drops ball down out of glove and up into a good throwing position with an arm angle of just past 90-100 degrees (elbow/forearm).
- Fingers should be on top of ball and kid should be making a Peace Sign to someone behind him. If the player looks behind him, he should see his fingers and not the ball.
- Back Elbow should be at or slightly above shoulder level.
- Front elbow is pointing toward target with glove thumb down (instead of straight, front elbow is bent inward, thumb down).

Checkpoints: As you can imagine, there are a lot of checkpoints at this vital position and a lot of the reasons why bad mechanics happen, start here. Take your time and walk the line as they hold the position, 2 coaches helpful.

- Look for Fingers on top of ball out of glove, Peace Sign back toward you, elbow at or above shoulder, 90-100 degree angle of elbow and forearm, front arm - elbow toward target, glove thumb down.

Step 4: Coach says, "Step and Throw" - Kids throw the ball to teammate.

Checkpoints: Make sure they do not immediately turn the Peace Sign around and push the ball, tell them it will happen naturally as they bring their arm forward.

Make sure they do not drop their elbow down below their shoulder level when they throw.

Step 5: The other kids get to do it.... Coach says, "Skateboard" and repeat.

Step 6: Coach says, "Step, Pull the Glove and Throw"

- After the kids have done this for awhile and you are seeing some improvement or recognition of what is going on, add the Pull the Glove aspect into the Step and Throw.

Show the kids that by Pulling the Glove into their Armpit, they will bring their shoulders through quicker and enable them to throw faster and more accurately.

- Eventually you will need to pick up the pace to more game type speed.

This will also protect their arms down the road because they will not start the bad habit of flying the glove hand open when they throw - putting added pressure on the elbow and shoulder.

This is pretty basic and really should be for the younger age groups but I have been amazed at how many kids come up through the ranks with bad throwing habits. Get to them early or late and this drill can help develop proper mechanics.

- This drill will also help you develop your pitchers at an early age and give them a lot of the mechanics needed to be consistent and healthy pitchers.

As you progress and depending on your age groups, you will obviously want to develop footwork to go along with any throwing motion.

- Catch or Field the ball, Step over with the Right would take the place of "Skateboard" and so on.

Drill: Stride (Lead with the Hip) Pitchers

Purpose:

Helps develop proper Stride for Pitchers

Equipment:

Gloves and baseball.

Setup:

This drill can be done without throwing (just simulating a throw) or with another Pitcher and baseball.

Execution:

Pitcher will get into a Starting or Set position.

- Pitcher will simply lift leg to "lift position" and Stride to foot strike

Make sure we get to a good Lift Position with Front Knee over the Back Knee.

- No need to worry about hands or throwing position at this time (add it later)
- We want the Pitcher to get the feel of leading with front hip and then throwing the leg out to Stride landing.
- Do not turn back foot over at this time, just drag it but no rotation to the toe.
- Do this 30-40 times a day until comfortable with it, make it homework if needed.
- Once pitcher is comfortable with this aspect, add the Push from back foot (ball of foot) off the rubber to go with the hip lead and feeling of throwing the leg to foot strike or landing.
- The ball of the back foot will now push off and rotate to the toe as you take your stride. This should now be a more powerful move and increase the length of the stride.
- Measure the stride from time to time to show how far you want the Pitcher to stride (100% of body height). This stride length should be longer after you initiate the ball of the foot push - let them see this and understand the importance.
- Do this 30-40 times per day. Be patient with how you move from step to step, too much in one day can lead to starting over the next time.

From here, you can progress to the Delayed Shoulder Rotation Drill - be patient.

Drill: Delayed Shoulder Rotation (Pitchers)

Purpose:

Teaching Pitchers how to get to the proper throwing position to generate velocity. Also puts an emphasis on Proper Posture, Balance and Body Position from Start to Foot Strike.

Equipment:

Gloves and Baseball (non throwing drill)

Setup:

Pitcher and Coach, mound is optimal but not necessary.

Execution:

1. Pitcher will take his starting position and come to a set position.

Things to check:

- Feet start no more than shoulder width apart
- Front foot is in slightly closed position at set up
- Weight is on Balls of Feet
- Knees are slightly bent / flexed
- Ball and Glove are in middle of body (middle meaning in alignment with spine)
- Fingers are on top of ball while holding in glove
- Shoulders are slightly closed, matching feet
- Chin is over the front shoulder
- Shoulders are relaxed
- Back in good balance posture (not too upright or leaning over)

2. Pitcher will elevate front knee to leg lift position and hold for 2 seconds (this is only to allow for position check)

Things to check:

- Back foot is still flat to ground
- Front Knee is over Back Knee
- Front Foot is hanging directly below Knee (it has not extended outward or curled inward)
- Weight is still on ball of back foot
- Knees are still bent / flexed as in Starting Position (no more or less)
- Hands are still positioned in middle of body (aligned with the spine)
- Hands still together
- Shoulders still closed
- Posture is maintained from Starting Position

3. Pitcher takes Stride to Foot Strike and holds position

Things to check:

- Did Pitcher lead with hip?
- Did Pitcher separate hands as motion started forward?
- Did ball hand drop freely from glove and did arm elevate ball into throwing position?
- Did Front hip assist in throwing the front leg forward toward home?
- Did Pitcher maintain foot alignment from start to foot strike?
- Does Pitcher's Stride equal 90-100% of Pitcher's actual height?
- Does Pitcher stride and keep hips closed until foot strike?
- Does Pitcher's front foot land with foot opened toward home plate?
- Did Pitcher push off with the ball of his foot?

- Is Pitcher's head position maintained in center of body over belly button (center of gravity)?
- Are Pitchers hips starting to open at foot strike?
- Are Pitchers shoulders closed at foot strike (as hips are starting to open)?
- Does Pitcher have an Equal and Opposite position with his throwing arm and glove arm?
- Is ball facing the SS or Second Base at foot strike?

Obviously this is a Drill that will require the player to repeat each step several times to ensure that he is doing everything (or most) correctly.

This will take some time at first so be patient and do not rush to the next step until the Pitcher can perform the prior step appropriately.

This is probably a higher level Drill for pitchers, I would say at least 9 years old (that may be pushing it).

I would highly recommend trying to film this after some sort of comfort level had been achieved - lots of things to check and difficult to check everything on each movement (especially the third).

Once a Pitcher gets this down, I would practice this as often as possible. Standing around time at practice - "Jimmy, give me 10 good Delayed Shoulder Positions".

This could also be something to take home and do in front of the mirror or explain it to Dad and have him work with at home.

I think in the long run, this could be one of the most important pitching drills you could do. It may take awhile but imagine once your Pitcher gets this down and can get into this position on every pitch.

Drill: Hip Rotation (Pitchers)

Purpose:

Helps develop proper hip rotation and rotation on the back toe for Pitchers.

How often do you see young Pitchers do nothing with the back leg, it just stops as they throw, this drill can help that as well.

Equipment:

Gloves and baseball.

Setup:

This drill can be done without throwing (just simulating a throw) or with another Pitcher and baseball.

Execution:

Pitcher will go through Starting position, Stride to Foot Strike position and hold there.

Pitcher will then from this position: rotate back foot and roll to toe while opening hips and throwing to teammate.

This can be done while simply playing catch as well or as part of the previous delayed shoulder rotation drill.

After the ball is released, the back foot can kick up and out and land about even with the front foot.

If throwing - make sure the foot does not come off the ground until after the ball has been released.

The important part is to focus on the hip rotation and rotation on the back toe.

For older or advanced players, have them get to the Stride to Foot Strike position and then close their eyes and throw to a catcher.

- This can develop confidence, body awareness and attention to detail with their mechanics.
- It could go a long way toward their mental makeup as well, if I can throw with my eyes closed, look out!

Drill: Reading Pitch Trajectory

Purpose:

Develop base runners ability to read the trajectory of the pitch to determine if it will hit the dirt. Allow the defense to work on defense in the same situations.

Equipment:

Baseballs, catchers in gear, batting helmets

Setup:

Have a complete infield including a couple of catchers in gear. Coach will pitch. Have the rest of the team with helmets on to run the bases. You don't need a hitter.

Execution:

Vary the situation by changing how many runners on base. Start with a runner on first, then first and second, first and third, finally bases loaded.

Coach will throw pitches to the catcher. Every few pitches he will throw one in the dirt.

Each runner should be watching the delivery of the pitch and try to read the trajectory to determine if the pitch will be in the dirt. If the runners read that the ball will be in the dirt, he should be more aggressive taking his secondary lead anticipating that he can advance to the next base on a passed or blocked ball.

With a runner on first only, have the runners steal when they determine the ball will be in the dirt. If they read it correctly, it should be an easy steal even if the ball is blocked and/or caught on the bounce by the catcher.

When on 2nd and 3rd the runners will be aggressive in taking the secondary lead and determine if they should go or stay. The goal is for runners to get used to reading the pitch and avoiding the hesitation that often happens when a pitch bounces in the dirt.

Defensively this drill gives catchers practice at blocking pitches in the dirt with game situations. Encourage the catchers to throw the ball when runners get too far off. This is a chance for them to learn when to throw the ball and when to run someone back. It also benefits the runners as they learn how far they can get off and how to get back quickly.

Youth Coaches Note: In youth leagues where there is no leading off, this drill can still be useful in helping players get a better jump and can help defensively as well. Often young players are not prepared for the ball thrown in the dirt even though it happens many times a game. Have an assistant coach watch the runners for hesitation as they leave the base.

*** New for 2012:** At the Majors Level, a batter can run to first on a dropped third strike when First Base is unoccupied or when there are two outs.

* This should be a drill that is worked on frequently as this will be something new for most players and will come into play often during a game. Work on the various situations that will occur with runners at First and First Unoccupied, with a Coach at bat who swings and misses at strike three - ball in dirt, wild pitch, 1-2 outs etc.

Drill: Outfield Drop Step - Inside Turn

Purpose:

Give outfielders practice at performing a drop step and adjusting to a ball hit at an angle over their heads.

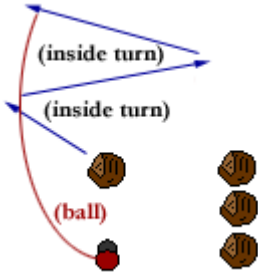
Equipment:

Baseballs

Setup:

Have outfielder start about 10 feet in front of you. Have a line of outfielder a few feet away.

Execution:



With the ball in your hand, point in one direction, player should take a drop step to that side and continue back at an angle. After he has taken a few steps, move the ball to the other side. The player should plant with outside leg and take an inside step to change directions. He should be able to keep his eyes on you the entire time. Change directions one more time, then throw the ball at about the same angle he is heading for him to catch.

To add difficulty make the throw in the opposite direction to force one more inside step.

Notes: This drill will help a player adjust to the ball that is hit very high, or has a slice to it, but not way over his head. As with all outfield play make sure your players don't drift to the ball.

- * Focus on the drop step, that is what this drill is about.
- * Feel free to throw the ball on the first drop step to begin with and move to the multiple turns later in season or drill.
- * Make sure the player does not shuffle the feet or jump to get the separation he wants on the drop step. Practice dropping the Left Foot while pulling the Left Elbow back (open the gate) to help turn the body into position to run straight back to get behind the ball.
- * Do the same for the Right Foot and Right Elbow drop step.

Drill: Outfield Drop Step - Turn Your Back

Purpose:

Give outfielders practice at performing a drop step and adjusting to a ball hit deep over their heads.

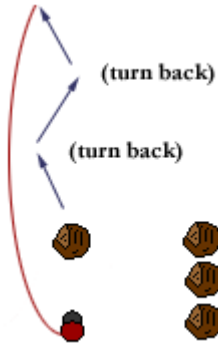
Equipment:

Baseballs

Setup:

Have outfielder start about 10 feet in front of you. Have a line of outfielder a few feet away.

Execution:



With the ball in your hand, point in one direction, player should take a deep drop step to that side and continue back at an deep angle, but not so deep that he can't look over his shoulder and see you. After he has taken a few steps, move the ball to the other side. The player should turn his head and change his angle to the other direction picking you up as soon as possible. Change directions one more time, then throw the ball over his head for him to catch.

To add difficulty make the throw over the other shoulder to force one more turn.

Notes: On a ball that is hit deep over an outfielder's head, the wind, the slice of the ball, or an incorrect angle can put an outfielder in a position where the ball is going to land over the opposite shoulder of where he is looking. This drill will help an outfielder gain confidence in what is a very difficult catch.

- * I suggest starting with just the first "deep turn your back" adjustment
- * Focus on the drop step, that is what this drill is about.
- * Feel free to throw the ball on the first drop step to begin with and move to the multiple turns later in season or drill.
- * Make sure the player does not shuffle the feet or jump to get the separation he wants on the drop step. Practice dropping the Left Foot while pulling the Left Elbow back (open the gate) to help turn the body into position to run straight back to get behind the ball.
- * Do the same for the Right Foot and Right Elbow drop step.

Drill: Outfield Get the Angle

Purpose:

Gives outfielders practice at taking the proper angle to cut-off a ball in the gap and circle the ball if time allows.

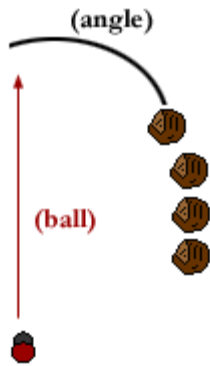
Equipment:

Baseballs

Setup:

Have outfielder start about 50 feet in front of you. Have a line of outfielder a few feet away.

Execution:



This drill has the coach throw balls on the ground and in the air to simulate different balls that are hit in the outfield gaps. If you have difficulty throwing a tennis racket can be used. This will help you have better control over where the ball goes.

Have the players work on taking the proper angle to the ball making sure they error on the side of getting behind the ball and not letting it get by. Emphasize to the players that by getting behind the ball they will be in a good position to make a throw.

* Emphasize that if they take the time to get the angle (get behind the ball) they need to then come up, field the ball and make a quick throw to the cut-off man. If they wait for the ball once behind it, the runner will take the extra base anyway.

Drill: Outfield Shallow Fly Balls

Purpose:

Runners working on tagging up and coming off the third base on shallow fly balls, INF/OF communication on short fly balls, 3B/Pitcher/Catcher relay to home.

Equipment:

Baseballs, batting helmets and a fungo

Setup:

Have 2 catchers, 2 third basemen, 2 shortstops and 3-4 left fielders, rest of the team should have helmets.

Execution:

Have a line of runners at third base. Hit soft line drive and fly balls into shallow left field. The runner at third base should move back to tag as he reads the fly ball of the bat. He should then try to determine whether the fly ball will be caught and whether he should stay on the base or come off and move down the line.

Have the next fielders and runner ready to jump in after each play to keep the drill moving along.

Coaching Note: This is one of the most difficult base running situations, so try not to stop the drill each time and critique each decision. The more reps the base runners get in the more they will get the idea.

This drill also gives outfielders and infielders an opportunity to work on calling for a fly ball and being called off by another player.

This drill also gets Catchers communicating with cut off men and lining up play at home.

* You can rotate this drill to Center Field and Right Field to involve second base and first base.

* Rotate base runners into fielding positions and vice versa to maximize exposure.

Drill: Outfield Left, Right, Back & In

Purpose:

Simply works on outfielder movement in all directions including drop step and tracking a ball.

Equipment:

Baseballs, Gloves, 1 or 2 coaches/helpers

Setup:

Have 3-4 outfielders in line to take turns one at a time. If more than 4 outfielders, try to have another coach/helper run the same drill so you have smaller groups. Each Coach has a glove.

Execution:

Have 1 outfielder square up about 60-80 feet from Coach.

The rest of the outfielders should be between and off to side of Coach and Outfielder (stay out of outfielders way).

Coach will Throw ball to the Left of outfielder - he runs and catches it and throws to Coach.

Coach will then throw to the Right of player - he runs and catches it and throws to Coach.

Coach will then throw deep behind player - he drop steps and tries to get behind ball, catch and throw to Coach.

Coach will then throw short in front of player - he races in to catch and throw to Coach.

Next player jumps into position and repeat.

Coaching Note:

This is a good drill and can be used in warm ups before games to both focus attention and loosen up legs and arms.

Coach can adjust throwing speed and height to allow players to make "dives - Web Gems" or basic to work on getting behind ball.

Coach can throw on ground to work on rounding the ball.

Coach should watch for proper technique, 4 seam throws, Crow Hops, Shuffle Throws, drop steps.

Depending on Coach's arm strength or skill with fungo, this drill can be stretched to further distances to simulate more actual outfield play.

Drill: Outfield QB & WR

Purpose:

Works on an outfielder running to make a catch, running on toes, conditioning/warm up.

Equipment:

Baseballs, Gloves, 1 Coach

Setup:

1 Coach with Glove, all players with a Baseball and Glove.

Execution:

Have all players or all outfielders form a line with Coach about 40-60 feet away.

First player runs to Coach, flips ball underhanded to Coach and then runs a short WR pattern. Coach throws to player who forms another line on side he just caught the ball.

Next player does the same.

This drill is designed to have longer and longer throws each time through the line. Best to do in center field.

Coaching Note:

Coach runs this drill by telling the first player where to run and then all other players follow same pattern.

Coach controls difficulty of catches by where he tells players to run and how he throws the fly ball.

Good drill to do often and improve skills throughout the season.

Kids enjoy this drill and look forward to the difficult catches.

Good warm up and conditioning drill before or after practice/game.

Watch for kids to run on their toes to avoid ball "bouncing" too much in air.

Drill: Fly Ball Communication

Purpose:

To work on communication between players on fly balls and infield pop-ups

Equipment:

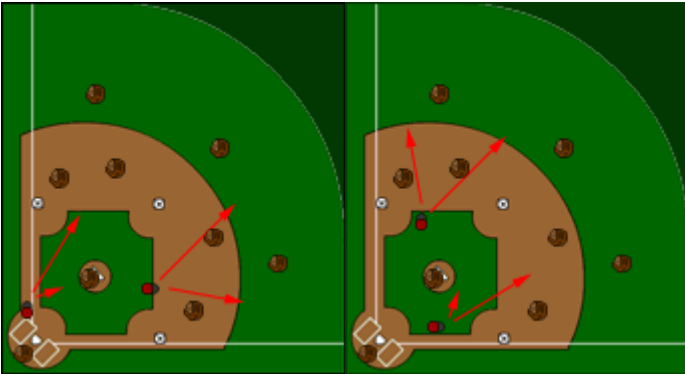
A few baseballs

Setup:

Have two coaches run this drill. One coach will be on the third base side and the other will be on the first base side. Have players in all positions. Outfielders shouldn't be as deep as normal.

Execution:

Coaches will alternate throwing shallow fly balls to the outfield and then to the infield on their side of the field. Fielders will communicate (see [outfield communication](#)) using appropriate calls and make the catch.



Drill: Relay Race

Purpose:

Team cutoffs/relay, player communication, defensive situations and a practice competition

Equipment:

Baseballs and Gloves

Setup:

Divide team in 2-3 groups (insert a coach if necessary to even out groups)

Line up, equal distance apart in outfield (foul line to foul line), at least 60-80 feet apart if possible

Execution:

Simply start the ball with each team at one end of the line and say go.

Player 1 will throw to Player 2 who will throw to Player 3 and so on, down and back to where the ball started.

Instruct players to catch the ball with two hands when possible (for faster transition), work their feet, turn their body and catch the ball on the Glove Hand Side. The last thing you want to see is flat footed players, backhanding the ball and then turning toward their throwing hand and throwing against their bodies.

Instruct players that the goal is to catch and throw as fast as possible as if a runner is going for second base on a cut 2 play.

Coaching Note:

Make sure players do not "square up" the catch then turn to throw, get them to work feet and turn sideways for fast relay.

Make it a game that involves the losing team to do 10 pushups or sit ups.

Do it until both sides can do it well, need to be able to play catch to play baseball...

Adjust the space in between each player based on the age group you have.

Drill: Double Cut

Purpose:

Base running, team cutoffs, player communication and defensive situations

Equipment:

Baseballs, batting helmets and a fungo

Setup:

Have players at each position on the field (pitcher is helpful but can be optional depending on numbers). The rest of players start off as runners, starting from home plate area.

Execution:

Hit ball between or over outfielder's head, in the gap or down the line past outfielder.

Team philosophy should be any such ball that gets past our outfielders is a Double Cut to Third with the assumption that we will not be able to get the ball to second in time. Explain that this does not mean that we will throw to the first cut and then to the second cut and then to third but rather that it means that both the SS and 2B will go out into cut position.

If the ball is hit from Right Center to the Right Field line, the Second Baseman will go out as normal and be the cut-off man, the SS will hustle to place himself about 15 feet directly behind the Second Baseman. If the throw is on target to the Second Baseman, he will field it, turn and throw LOW and hard to Third Base. The SS should duck out of the way.

If the throw from the outfielder is too high or too low, the Second Baseman should let it go to the SS behind him who can catch it in the air or get a better bounce on a low throw, turn and throw LOW and hard to Third Base.

If the ball is hit from Center Field to the Left Field line, the SS will go out as normal and be the cut-off man, the Second Baseman will hustle to place himself about 15 feet directly behind the SS.

If the throw from the outfielder is too high or too low, the SS should let it go to the Second Baseman behind him who can catch it in the air or get a better bounce on a low throw, turn and throw LOW and hard to Third Base.

* Third Baseman should immediately yell "Double Cut 3" when the ball gets past outfielders and then loudly line up the cut men so they are in position to make throw to Third Base.

* When he hears "Double Cut 3", the First Baseman should let the runner who hit the ball round first and then follow him to second, if the runner rounds second base and stops due to lack of speed or an excellent double cut, the First Baseman is there to throw behind the runner and pick him off.

Coaching Note: Make sure your "Double Cut" players are lined up correctly so that a throw that is too high for the first, goes to the second and a throw that is too low and bounces past the first can be fielded by the second.

Make sure the Third Baseman takes responsibility for lining up the cut off.

Make sure that your Catcher is vocal on the Double cut as well, especially the throw behind the runner at Second Base - the Catcher will be able to see this play better than anyone.

Make sure we are throwing rainbows to third base, we would rather see the ball bounce 15 times on a low hard throw than a rainbow throw.

Drill: Catcher Hockey Goalie

Purpose:

This game helps your catchers develop the skill of blocking pitches in the dirt.

Equipment:

Catcher in full gear; 2 cones; baseballs

Setup:

Place a cone on each side of the catcher. Vary width depending on age, skill level.

Execution:

Coach will position himself about 30 feet in front of the plate depending on arm strength. For younger players I would recommend having a coach or parent throw the balls instead of a player.

Throw balls to the catcher between the cones. Throw most in the dirt, but also throw some in the air to make sure the catcher isn't dropping early. Vary throws on each side and in front of the catcher.

Throw 10 pitches and count the number of goals allowed.

Repeat the drill 2 or 3 times.

Track goals allowed from practice to practice.

When catcher is consistently blocking most pitches, widen cones to force the catcher to take a step before dropping.

Drill: Catcher Sway and Frame - 5 to 1

Purpose:

Improve the catchers ability to determine when to frame a pitch.

Equipment:

Catcher in full gear; 5 baseballs

Setup:

Coach should be from 30 to 50 feet from the catcher depending on the arm strength and accuracy of the coaches arm. Catcher should know the basics of swaying and framing.

Execution:

This drill is a 5 round drill where the coach will throw a pitch. The catcher will sway to the pitch if needed, catch the ball, and frame the pitch if necessary. The coach is the umpire and it's up to him to determine if the catcher made the right decision about whether to frame the pitch or not.

If the coach determines that the catcher made the wrong decision or used poor technique, the drill stops, all balls are returned to the coach and the drill starts over.

First round is 5 pitches with the catcher dropping the ball to the side after catching it and framing it if necessary. The coach should throw the pitches rapidly. This helps the catcher develop a good habit of not framing the pitch for too long. Second round is 4 pitches, Third round - 3 pitches, etc.

The goal for the catcher is to complete the drill without having to start over.

Modification:

Changing the number of rounds will help make this drill work with any age group.

Drill: Catcher Throwing to Second

Purpose:

Helps to teach the catcher the importance of quick feet and proper technique when throwing to second base.

Equipment:

Catchers gear, baseballs, stop watch

Setup:

Have a player or two cover second base. A pitcher on the mound to throw a pitch and your catchers behind the plate.

Execution:

Have the pitcher go through his stretch motion and pitch the ball to the catcher who is behind the plate. The catcher will catch the ball and throw to second as if a runner is stealing.

The coach should time the catcher as he makes the throw. Start the stop watch when the ball hits the glove and stop the stop watch when the tag is applied by the fielder covering second.

By waiting for the tag to be applied, you will be emphasizing the importance of accuracy in throwing a runner out.

For young catchers there is a tendency to take an extra step so they can get something extra on the throw. This drill will show them that it's more important to release the ball quickly than it is to take extra time and throw the ball harder.

- * Emphasize quick feet, quick release and not extra step and throw hard.
- * This drill can be used when throwing to Third Base as well.
- * Continue this drill with pick off moves to First Base and Third Base.

Drill: Infield Empty Bucket Practice

Purpose:

This infield drill gives players a chance to work on the double play, play multiple positions, field and throw in a game type situation. It can also be valuable to Managers early in season when evaluating players for best positions.

Equipment:

Fungo, Empty Buckets and Baseballs

Setup:

Have players take a position in the infield: at least 2 at 1B.

Place a Pop Up Net about 10 feet from second base, slightly outside the baseline between First and Second Base. If you do not have such a net, simply place an empty bucket behind second base, toward the outfield grass.

Place an Empty Bucket behind first base, toward the dugout.

Have two buckets of baseballs and two coaches (with bat if hitting or without if throwing) positioned accordingly on the infield (if throwing) or on either side of home plate (if hitting).

Execution:

I like to start the season by rolling/throwing the ground balls to players to build confidence, evaluate player strengths and develop proper technique.

I usually do this drill with 2 coaches and 2 empty buckets, nice to have 2 full buckets of balls as well but can make do with less.

Coach A will roll or hit balls to the SS who will throw or underhand toss to 2B, who turns double play by throwing into the net (DO NOT THROW TO FIRST BASE).

Coach A will roll or hit balls at, to the left and to the right of the SS to evaluate and simulate game situations. Because of the short throws involved, I like a fairly rapid pass when fundamentals are done correctly.

Coach A will then roll or hit balls to the 2B who throws to the SS covering Second and turning the double play by throwing into the net (DO NOT THROW TO FIRST BASE).

Coach A will roll or hit balls at, to the left and to the right of the 2B to evaluate and simulate game situations. Because of the short throws involved, I like a fairly rapid pass when fundamentals are done correctly.

Coach B, at the same time as Coach A will roll or hit balls to the 3B who will field and throw to 1B - First Baseman will drop ball in bucket.

Coach B should roll or hit balls at, to the left and to the right of 3B to evaluate and simulate game situation. Moderate pace.

Drill: Infield Empty Bucket Practice (cont.)

Coach B should then roll or hit slow rollers or bunts and have the 3B charge (bare hand when appropriate) and throw to 1B, First Base puts ball in bucket.

Then Switch it up:

Balls thrown or hit to 3B, who throws to 2B who completes double play by throwing ball into net.

Balls thrown or hit to SS, who throws to 1B. Looking for range in hole, good feet and strong accurate throws.

* You can also do this drill by simple putting everyone at SS and 2B (with 2-3 at 1B) and one coach rolling or hitting balls to either SS or 2B, turn two with throw to 1B - First Baseman puts balls in empty bucket by dugout. This drill can also be done without the throw to 1B, just have the player put the ball in an empty bucket behind Second Base, toward the outfield grass - saves on the arms early in season.

* You can also evaluate fielding in general by having two groups at SS and 2B and two coaches rolling or hitting balls to their group of fielders - once the ball is fielded, the fielder will hustle the ball to an empty bucket behind their group - saves on the arms early in season.

* After the Coaching Bucket is empty, bring full buckets to Coaches, player takes empty buckets back to positions and the drill continues as needed. Also a good time for the Coaches to switch groups to be able to see the other kids in action.

Things to look for:

- On double play transitions, Second Basemen should stop just short of 2B, place LEFT foot on base, catch ball with two hands (for quicker transition to first), push off 2B toward the outfield with left foot (clears fielder from sliding base runner) and make quick throw into net or first base - depending on drill set up. Do not take steps toward first base, push off and throw quickly.
- On double play transitions, Short Stop should approach base with RIGHT foot on outside part of base (clears fielder from sliding base runner), catching ball with both hands (for quicker transition to first), slide right foot behind left (to square shoulders to first base) and throw to first.
- On 3B to 2B double plays, look for accurate throws from Third, at higher levels focus on quick accurate throws for a chance at double play. At lower levels, focus on making a good throw and getting the lead runner out at second base.
- When a throw is going to 1B, look for proper feet mechanics from First Baseman (usually Right Foot on bag for RH, and Left Foot for LH players) and ability to field bad throws - ok to come off base on bad throws.
- With all fielders, look for good ready position, walking into pitch (Right foot, Left foot, Knees bent, Hands out front).
- Charge ball as needed, square up ball in center of body to slightly on glove hand side, two hands.
- Field ball, step over with Right Foot (for RH players), left foot moves toward target and throw.

Drill: Infield Throw and Cover

Purpose:

Fun competition that allows players to focus on fielding and making good throws.

Equipment:

Infield area with bases and a bucket or bag of balls.

Setup:

All infield positions are used except for the pitcher.

Execution:

This drill requires a minimum of 5 players but can accommodate more. Start with a player at each position and the drill proceeds much like a standard infield.

Place the bucket in foul territory next to 3rd base.

- Start the drill by hitting a ground ball to the 3rd baseman and have him throw to 1st. 1st baseman will then throw to the catcher who will throw it to 3rd and the 3rd baseman will put the ball in the bucket.
- Next ground ball to the SS with the throw to 1st and then to the catcher who this time will throw it down to 2nd (SS covers) and then SS throws over to 3rd, tag and in the bucket.
- Next ground ball to the 2B with the throw to 1st and then to the catcher who this time will throw it down to 2nd (2B covers) and then the 2B throws over to 3rd, tag and in the bucket.
- Next ground ball to the 1B, touches first base and throws home, Catcher then throws to 3B, tag and into bucket.
- Next roll a ball to catcher in fair or foul territory to mimic a bunt or strike three wild pitch (new for 2012) and have the catcher throw to 1B to end the round.
- Keep track of any errors that occur or don't place the ball in the bucket. The goal is to make it through the drill without any errors.
- If you have two players at each position you can have two teams and compete between the teams.
- You can also have players rotate positions as a good drill for the beginning of the season or tryouts.
- Be patient with this drill, it is a good one but will take some time to master.

Drill: Infield Follow the Ball

Purpose:

Warm-up and conditioning infield drill

Equipment:

Infield area with bases and balls.

Setup:

Place 1 player at each infield position except pitcher. All other players are in a line at SS ready to receive a ground ball.

Execution:

Coach hits a ground ball to the SS who throw to 1B, who throws to 2B, who throws to 3B who throws home. After each throw the player goes to the base they just threw to for the next round, and the catcher goes to the back of the line at SS (thus follow the ball).

In all cases the focus is on good throws, proper catching technique and tagging. 1B should be focused on a proper step and catch, 2B, 3B and Catcher should receive the ball in the correct manner so they can place the tag quickly.

We use this as a warm up drill to work on several different items quickly, while also working on running and conditioning in quick sprints. Good way to get the blood flowing at the start of a practice. You can also make it a game by counting errors for throwing and catching (fewest points is the winner).

Drill: Infield Short Hops

Purpose:

Become better at fielding hit or thrown balls that short hop the fielder, hand eye coordination.

Equipment:

Gloves and baseballs.

Setup:

Pair up your players (groups of 2) and line them up across from each other, start about 10 feet apart.

This can be done anywhere but best if done on an infield surface to get better hops.

Execution: Short Hop - Straight at the player:

Player with ball will throw the ball so that it short hops his partner, straight at the player (middle of body).

Fielder will work on Starting with the glove low to ground (easier to come up then go down) and hands relaxed out in front of body (as opposed to catching ball back between legs).

Fielder should have a "Big Glove" meaning the wrist and fingers are bent down toward the ground rather than fingers pointed at thrower.

Coach can draw a line in dirt out in front of each player and ask them to field ball out in front (helps for those fielding back between legs).

Player who caught the ball then does the same throw to his partner.

Short Hop - Backhand:

Same process but this time the ball is thrown to the backhand side of the player.

Fielder should start low and gently sweep to the ball, keeping his glove fairly horizontal to the ground, coming up more as needed. Player can turn sideways to the backhand side or be on one knee for this part.

Fingers of glove should be down and a little back.

Watch for and avoid the player who sweeps and flips the wrist with fingers toward the thrower. The wrist should be fairly stiff or remain in the same position while sweeping and backhanding the ball.

Short Hop - Forehand:

Same process but to the Forehand (glove) Side. Player can turn sideways to the backhand side or be on one knee for this part.

Fielder should start low with fingers toward ground, big open glove and gently sweep toward ball horizontally - coming up as necessary. Again, watch for the flipping of the wrist upward - keep it in same position while sweeping.

Expand the Distance and Velocity of throw: get better and more actual game speed throws

As players get comfortable and skill level, increases with this fundamental, move them back to 20-25 feet and repeat the process.

Standing for ball Straight at them and Standing or on One Knee for the backhand and forehand part of the drill.

* The thrower is important, you will only get as much out of this drill as the focus and accuracy of the thrower.

Drill: Throws to First Base

How many times has an infielder made a good throw to first and the first baseman drops it or gets his feet tangled up getting to the bag?

How many times has your first baseman stretched too early and not been able to handle a ball slightly offline?

How many times would a nice short hop pick by your first baseman got you out of a jam or bailed out the infielder who made a less than desirable throw?

How much time have you devoted to working with your first basemen on these plays?????

Purpose:

This drill helps your first baseman work on footwork and fielding balls thrown online, offline and in the dirt.

Equipment:

Bucket of Baseballs, Gloves, First Basemen or potential candidates, Empty Bucket.

Setup:

Have first basemen in a line by first base in a normal defensive starting position.

Execution:

Coach will stand midway between first and second, at second base, at SS, and at third base.

- Coach will vary his throwing position based on time and efficiency of first baseman.

Coach will start by making relatively good throws to first base and let first baseman work his feet appropriately (usually always with throwing side foot on the bag for this drill) and catch the ball.

- Coach should emphasize that the first baseman does not stretch too early but only after seeing the trajectory of the ball.

Coach will then throw the ball more off line but still in the air and watch for first baseman making great stretch or coming off bag when appropriate (have the first baseman tag the imaginary runner when they do come off the bag).

- Make first baseman aware of their position in regards to the baseline and potential collisions with the runner.

Coach will then throw the ball in the dirt to the first baseman. Ball should be thrown on all sides to allow first basemen to work on fielding balls in the dirt on different sides and angles.

Once a player has caught the ball he will put it in an empty bucket and go to the end of the line. This helps speed up the drill for more repetition.

For younger players use softer baseballs to allow them to gain confidence. Don't use tennis balls as they won't give a true enough hop.

- ❖ Remember to spend some time with Pop Ups to your first basemen as well. I think I have seen these miss played more than any other pop up to the infield.
- Include balls that are towards the fence - use age appropriate judgment in doing this drill.