



MORNINGTON
Baseball Club
Est. 1975

Baseball Team Drill

Goal:

Teach actual game play conditions, and teach the batter to place the ball to specific locations.

Drill:

1. Start by dividing up into teams of 4.
2. Bring in the first team of 4 to bat, the rest of the teams play defense in the field. (short sided defense in the outfield is fine)
3. Each team bats until they get 3 outs or 4 runs. Keep track of runs. You should be able to get each team in to bat 2 to 4 times.
4. For the first half of the mini team practice, the coach soft tosses the ball to the batter, and plays catcher. Coach should be in the opposite batter box.
5. The coach quietly tells the batter where he wants him to hit the soft tossed ball. (such as right field line, or between fielders) If the batter does not hit to the coaches location it counts as an out for the team.
6. This game drill can be done with soft toss, a pitcher/catcher, the pitching machine or tee ball.
7. By changing how a team wins you can change the focus of the practice from offense to defensive:

Offensive focus: The team with the highest score wins.

Defensive focus: The team that gave up the least runs wins.

This drill gives the team real plays on both offense and defense and makes the practice fun.

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Beat the Ball Drill

Divide the group into teams of 4, one team bats, one team plays the infield & the other team plays the outfield.

Set up the defense (infield) and a hitter gets one soft toss from the plate to put the ball in play, the harder the better, no bunting. Fouls are outs.

It is the job of the infield to field the ball and throw to first base. First base gloves the ball and throws to second who in turn throws to third, and finally to home plate in succession before the runner gets around the bases.

If the runner beats the ball to home plate he scores 1 run. If the ball beats the runner to home plate then the runner is out. Bat through the whole team before changing sides. The highest score wins.

The way it develops is the kids try to hit liners where no defender stands, placing their hits and run like crazy....meanwhile, the infield is incredibly efficient at getting the ball in and throwing it around the horn (infield).

The kids not playing a base all communicate and line themselves up in a good backup position in case of a bad throw...but to get an out each base must be tagged while in possession of the ball before the next base can be thrown to. A lot of outs can be made with clean throws, but one bad throw in the process usually makes it able for batter to score.

Keep a kid on deck to make it go smoothly and rotate the kids in the field to let everyone 'play a base'.

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3-Way Scrimmage

If you have 12 kids, you can do a 3-way scrimmage.

Divide into 3 teams of 4. One team hits, one plays infield, and the other plays outfield (with one player remaining at the backstop an undressed catcher).

Coach pitches from the mound behind an L-screen.

The trick is to have players line their helmets and bats up outside the dugout so you can changeover quickly, because **each batter only gets one swing.**

When the players come to bat with 2 strikes against them, they instantly become more careful to put the ball in play.

If the quick change gets to be an issue, then you can play innings with more outs. But part of the fun is in running kids in and out and moving the game along rapidly. You can even put a timer on them so that they will collect an out if the batting can't put a batter to the plate within 90 seconds of the retired team's final out.

You can also play this with 8 kids, and just 2 teams if you ever have a shorthanded practice. It works best with at least 4 batters though.

Soft Toss Drill

You can use a regular size ball or a smaller ball to intensify the drill.

Position yourself to the batting side (right for right handed batters) and ahead of the batter. Toss the "ball" at the hip of the batter.

You want them to impact the ball in front of their body. This is the "contact point". The toss is important!! You do not want an arching toss.

The toss should be crisp, but not too fast and out in front of the batter. Practice this to get it correct.

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Adding Pressure to Infield Drills

We use this drill to warm up our players and teach them a bit about pressure before the technical part of the practice begins.

Divide the number of players into 3 equal groups.

One group goes to SS, one group to 1B and the last stays at home.

A coach hits the ball to SS and he throws the ball to first and runs to first after his throw. The 1B throws a ground ball to the catcher and then he follows his throw to home plate. The catcher fields the ground ball and hands the ball to the coach and then runs to SS.

Simple?

- Coach hits ground ball to SS
- SS throws to 1B
- 1B throws ground ball to C
- Catcher hands ball to coach
- SS goes to 1B after his throw
- 1B goes to C after his throw
- C goes to SS after his throw

Where's the pressure?

Here it comes.....the coach hits to the SS immediately after the 1B receives the first throw. In this way, everyone has to really hustle in and out of position to make this work.

Oh, one more thing. They must complete 3 full rotations without an error before we move on. So if you have 15 players that is 45 individual correct plays. A bad throw or poorly fielded balls are errors. A player knocking down a ground ball and keeping it in front of him is not an error.

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Running to First Base Drill

Have all your players line up behind home plate, and put the first kid into the batter's box, as if he is hitting.

On your signal, he runs down the first base line as hard as possible.

The first base coach either yells "Go! Go! Go!" indicating that he should advance to second base where the runner will run wide to the right of first base and proceed to second base. Make sure they touch the inside corner to the base when rounding first to second!!

Or the coach will yell "Dugout! Dugout!" (or "Right through, right through") indicating that the player must overrun first base by two or three steps, then tail off to the right as if he is going to the dugout. Make them turn back to their right, then race quickly back to first base, ready to advance.

Roll the Bat Drill

The players arrange on the field (semi-circle/pepper ball) and one player bats.

If the batter hits a fly ball and someone catches it then that person who caught it gets to bat.

BUT if the batter hits a ground ball and a player fields it then the batter lays the bat on the ground, the fielder has to stay in the same spot where they fielded the ball and rolls the ball on the ground and tries to hit the bat.

If they hit the bat with the ball then he/she gets to bat.

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Bucket Drill

This is a fun, productive drill, especially for younger kids, though older kids can gain benefit from it too.

It focuses on the importance of getting rid of the ball in a hurry.

Split your squad into two teams.

Line the first team up, one behind another, at the shortstop position.

Take the second squad and place them behind first base.

Next, place a five gallon bucket upside down on first base (a garbage bin can also work as a suitable target).

Make sure that you have plenty of baseballs handy.

A coach rolls or hits a ball to the first person in line at the shortstop position, who then has (3) three seconds to pick up the ball and throw it at the bucket.

The coach should loudly count off the seconds; this will initially fluster some of your younger players, but will also help them to cope with pressure better in the long run.

If the bucket is missed, the player behind first base fields the ball and returns it to the coach.

Regardless of the outcome, the player who made the throw rotates to the back of the line. If they hit the bucket they score 1 point.

After several passes through the line, switch sides.

As an added bonus, keep score between the two teams – it is amazing how much more effort you can get out of a kid if he's competing against his friends.

If you have enough coaching help, you can vary this drill by having both teams throw at the same time; the competition is a big hit with players.

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Speed Throw Drill

Run this drill in any large open area (a field or a gym).

Divide the team into as many groups of two (2) as possible.

If an uneven number of players are present use a coach/parent to fill out the last group.

One member of each group lines up on one side of the area, the second member opposite on the other side.

Space players an equal distance apart along each side of the area to allow room for safety.

Each group should have a ball. On the word "GO" each team begins throwing the ball back and forth across the area.

Each time a team completes one throw and catch they count one point.

If the throw is bad, or the ball is not caught, that team's score goes to zero.

Allow between thirty and sixty seconds for a round then call "STOP."

Each team then gives its score.

The team with the highest score wins and each of those two players gets one point.

Then rotate to the left so that all teams are different.

As soon as all teams are set and have a ball, start another round as above.

Run as many rounds as the time allotted for the drill will allow.

At the conclusion the player(s) with the most points win.

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Run Downs Drill

Players line up in groups of three, spread evenly apart.

The player in the middle is the base runner.

One player holds the baseball begins running towards the base runner, simulating a rundown situation.

We make one throw and a tag.

Players rotate positions.

In, Out, Up the Middle Drill

As each pitch approaches the plate, the hitter must call out the location of the pitch as he starts his swing (ie: inside, outside, or middle) and hit the ball to the appropriate part of the field.

Example: (Right-handed hitter)

Inside pitch; hitter should call out "in" and pull the ball to the left side of the infield.

Outside pitch; hitter should call "out" and hit the ball to the opposite field.

Pitch down the middle; hitter calls out middle and hits the ball back up the middle.

As you pitch, you're in a great position to see if the hitter is aware of the strike zone and able to hit the ball to all fields based on where the ball is pitched.

The tape on the plate will help you to analyze whether the correct location was called out by the hitter.

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Money Ball Hitting Drill

We play a game called “Money Ball.” It is a variation of batting practice (BP), but I think it keeps everyone more involved, not just the hitter.

Two teams of even number players, one team hitting other fielding.

Coach pitches (5) FIVE balls to each batter.

First (4) FOUR pitches are free pitches.

The 5th pitch is the MONEY BALL.

If you hit it and reach the base safely your team scores a point (run).

If the defensive team catches on the fly or gets the runner on the bases, or you miss the 5th pitch or hit foul the defense gets the run.

I think this puts some “friendly pressure” on the hitter to get the bat on the ball and put it in play. (It also puts some pressure on the coach to throw a hittable strike!! Sometimes THAT is the biggest challenge.)

The drill keeps BP upbeat for everyone and even though there really is no “count” on the batter, I find that each player is paying close attention to each pitch with anticipation for the MONEY BALL.

In the past I have also deducted points for lazy defensive play on the first 4 pitches, and lack of hustle in returning the balls from the backstop to the bucket at mound.

The kids love it. They want to play it every practice. During regular BP they are chanting “Money Ball” on every pitch.

Note: This drill is good for game play pressure when the batter has a 2 & 2 count at bat. (2 strike & 2 balls – the next one counts!)

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Bunting Drill

Junior players as young as 7-8 years old are really starting to get into the 'ins and outs' of baseball bunting and understanding that sometimes advancing base runners is good enough.

If you've got a few loose coins (ie: 50c or \$1 coin) on hand lay them down in places where ideal bunts would end up.

If the batter bunts and hits the coin they get to keep it.

You will probably be out of pocket a coin or two after going through the whole team but those coins do get smaller when you've got to land on them.

It is fun for the players to have the prospect of making a little 'pocket money'.

Note: Have a bag of lollies to reward all batters at the end of the drill for their efforts.

Bunting for Candy Drill

Another take on the bunting drill is to use candy.

Place some of the flat cones at the ideal spots with a candy bar resting on top of the cone.

Everyone gets 3-5 bunts.

Mark the bunt that is closest to a cone.

After everyone has a go, the person closest to each cone gets that candy bar.

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Tennis Ball Drill

For great outfield practice use a tennis racket & hit tennis-ball fly balls. The kids love it.

It also helps them get used to using two hands as the tennis balls like to bounce out of their gloves.

After a few practices you will notice a big difference in how much better they catch the ball.

It works great if you have a child who is afraid of the ball.

With the tennis ball you can teach them how to catch it & they will try harder as they know the tennis ball will not hurt them.

Once they start catching them they will have the confidence for a baseball.

Base Throw Drill

The base throw drill teaches players accurate throwing and tagging procedures during a rundown at second base.

To set up the drill, place a fielder at first and second base.

Divide the remaining players into two groups, setting one group behind first base and the other behind second.

The drill begins with the sound of your whistle, and all players except the fielders begin running wildly between first and second base. During this drill, the fielders are to tag as many players as possible. As soon as a player is tagged, they must exit the field.

The fielders are given one minute to tag as many players as possible. This drill forces your fielders to think on their feet and react quickly during a high-pressure situation.

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5 Ball Drill

Purpose: To practice footwork and releasing the ball quickly for the throw. An intense conditioning element is also a part of this drill.

Procedure:

1. This drill can be used with any of the infielders in a variety of situations. For each position, place five balls in a line in an area where that player would likely field balls. For example, to help the third baseman practice fielding bunts, set up five balls in a line extending from the foul line toward the pitcher's mound approximately 10 feet away from home plate, where the fielder would pick them up for a bunt.
2. The third baseman starts in his normal ready position and depth, then runs to surround the first ball and throws it to first. He then runs back to his starting position and quickly turns back to field the next ball. Repeat until the fielder throws all five balls.
3. Place the balls in similar areas for the first baseman and catcher. For middle infielders, place the balls to one side of each player and have them practice their throws to each of the bases.
4. Each player fields and throws two sets of five balls placed in slightly different locations.

Variation:

Two fielders can be fielding and throwing at the same time.

For example, the first baseman can practice fielding bunts and throwing to first while the third baseman fields bunts and throws to second. Or the first and third basemen can work together to field balls and practice throws while the shortstop and second baseman do the same.

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Infield Cover Drill

All infielders line up at the second base and shortstop positions.

A player in front of the base rolls the ball to either 2B or SS. who in turn throw to the opposite player covering the bag, then turns double-play pivot.

Pop Flies Drill

Infielders partner up.

One player throws a fly ball over the other player's head making him open step and drop back while keeping eye contact with the ball.

Square body up under the ball to make the catch.

You can also have players practice catching the ball over the shoulder from this position.

Back Hand Drill

Infielders partner up, rolling the ball to each other to their immediate left or right and practice proper glove side and backhand fielding techniques.

Glove Hand Drill

Infielders partner up, rolling the ball to each other to their immediate left or right and practice proper glove side and backhand fielding techniques.

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Long Toss Drill

The long toss drill is an excellent way to lengthen players' throwing distances and build players' arm strength, especially those who throw with a pushing motion.

To begin the drill, divide your team in partners standing facing each other approximately 30 feet apart. Where possible, partner together players with similar throwing distances.

Have the players throw and catch to each other.

When they successfully make 5 throws and catches each without missing a single one, have each player back up 5 feet, or the length of one giant stride.

Continue until players are no longer able to make the throws smoothly.

Quick Hands Drill

Quick hand drill is set up similarly to the Long Toss drill mentioned above: with players partnered off and standing facing each other about 30 feet apart.

The drill begins with a toot on the whistle and partners are to throw the ball back and forth between each other **as fast as** they possibly can.

As they make each catch, have the player yell out the number of catch it is.

Whichever pair can throw the most catches in a 30 second period, which is marked by another blow on the whistle, is the winner.

If either player misses a catch, their count returns to zero. As your team improves, have them begin standing further apart.

This drill is great for encouraging a little healthy competition amongst your team.

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Rectangular Throwing/Tagging Drill

Groups of four (4) kids with gloves.

Four cones set up in a rectangle 10m x 5 m (approx).



1 starts with the ball.

1 rolls ground ball to 2.

2 throws to 3 who practices a tag.

3 rolls ground ball to 4.

4 throws to 1 who practices a tag.

The fun bit!! After each action the player runs to the spot he passed the ball. I.e: 1 runs to 2, 2 runs to 3, 3 runs to 4, 4 runs to 1 then they start the drill over in an anti clockwise direction.

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Group Warm Up Throw

One large group in a circle.

Pair up opposite each other.

Throw one ball around the circle to players opposite.

Infield Dynamic Warm Up

Groups of five – Catcher, 1B, 2B, SS, 3B

Catcher rolls ground ball to SS

SS fields ball & throws to 1B

1B catches ball, touches base & throws to 3B

3B catches ball, touches base & throws to 2B

2B catches ball, touches base & throws home to catcher.

Fun bit!! After each throw the fielder is to run to the position they passed the ball to ie: C runs to SS, SS runs to 1B, 1B runs to 3B, 3B runs to 2B and 2B runs to C. The drill continues until all players have moved around the horn.

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PRACTICE PLAN 1

Warm-up - 10 minutes

- Slow Jog
- Stretch Legs
- Stretch Torso
- Stretch Arms

Base Running - 10 minutes

- Infield Hit (Through First)
- Round First (Single)
- Run for a Double
- Run for a Triple

Note: After each sprint to a base, the player should jog back to home plate.

Throwing - 10 minutes

- One partner should be on foul line and the other in the outfield.

Stations - Total of 40 minutes (10 minutes each)

- Ground Balls
- Pop-ups / Fly Balls
- Hitting on field or in batting cage/s
- Fielding balls hit by batter or hitting off of batting tees

Team Work Examples - 50 minutes

- Scrimmage
- Cut-offs / Relays
- Run-Downs
- Pitching Drills
- Base Stealing
- Base Running - Tagging up etc.

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PRACTICE PLAN 2

Duration: The plan is for a 90 minute practice with two coaches providing instruction and 12 kids per team participating.

- **Dynamic warm-up** (10 minutes)
- **Form throwing** (10 minutes)
- **Base running basics** (5 minutes)
- **Fielding** (10 minutes)
- **Hitting** (20 minutes)
- **Game situation: Where's the play?** (15 minutes)
- **Game situational hitting** (10 minutes)
- **Conditioning** (10 minutes)

Rules of practice for youth baseball

1. Fun! If practice is fun, the players will be focused. They will give 100 percent, and they certainly will look forward to each and every practice.
2. Keep them moving. Players should not be standing around. They should always be moving or learning.
3. Always focus on positives. There is never a good reason to yell or be negative during practice unless it impacts on the safety of players.

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PRACTICE PLAN 3

Duration: The plan is for a 90 minute practice with two coaches providing instruction and 12 kids per team participating.

Dynamic warm-up (10 minutes):

Forget the lap and stretch. Use movement preparation to prepare for game conditions.

Form throwing (10 minutes):

Start on one knee and work up to a regular standing throw. Most throwing warm-ups are not supervised carefully and are therefore mindless. Have the players develop proper throwing and catching mechanics. Proper habits developed now will last a lifetime and really pay off down the road.

Base running basics (5 minutes):

Now is a great time to teach proper base running, while also developing conditioning and getting the players ready for the rest of practice. I like to split the players into two groups (one coach with each). Have half of the kids go from home to first and work on rounding the bag, while the other group is scoring from second base. Each player can get three to four trips around the bases in five minutes.

Fielding (10 minutes):

Break into groups of infielders, outfielders and catchers. Coaches should hit balls (or if you have pitchers who are only pitchers) but it should be one right after the next. For example, hit to third and first, and they throw across the diamond. Right after you hit a ball to the third baseman, hit one to the shortstop, and have the middle infielders working on plays as 2B. If you have more than one coach you can have more than one hitting grounders, or have one roving coach helping out with instruction.

Hitting (20 minutes):

Again, break players into groups. The age groups and how many coaches you have will determine how many stations you can have. The more the better, as this means more swings in the given time frame. Obviously with six year olds you cannot leave them alone doing tee work, but with older kids you can. I use many different stations with tee work, soft toss and live hitting. The goal is 60-75 swings total each in 20 minutes.

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Game situation: Where's the play? (15 minutes):

Time here will depend on the age you are coaching. The more inexperienced the more time you will need to spend on baseball basics. But even high school and college teams will benefit from situational drills. This work can win -- or lose -- many games during the season. Rotate groups of three runners with fielders. This is also a great conditioning drill for the base runners.

Game situational hitting (10 minutes):

This is where three kids are up to bat, and the other nine are in the field. One or two of the three kids up to bat are on base, and a situation is given to the fielders. A live pitch is thrown, and the fielders attempt to make the play. The hitters switch each pitch, and groups of three are rotated. I also encourage using players at different positions so they know what to do at all times.

Conditioning (10 minutes):

I always like to put some fun conditioning drills at the end of practice. The kids love it, and they really receive great benefit as well. Some examples are sprinting competitions, medicine ball throws, football passes, pushups and general physical preparation. Keep it upbeat, and keep it fun!

Rules of practice for youth baseball:

1. Fun! If practice is fun, the players will be focused. They will give 100 percent, and they certainly will look forward to each and every practice.
2. Keep them moving. Players should not be standing around. They should always be moving or learning.
3. Always focus on positives. In my opinion there is never a good reason to yell or be negative during practice. If a kid needs to be disciplined, that's another story, but I still don't think yelling needs to be involved.

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