

Youth Baseball Fundamentals Workbook

So you have decided to coach!!!

That is fantastic! Now what? Some of you may have a ton of experience with baseball. Some may not. No matter what, in my opinion, it is never a bad thing to have some sort of guide to help offer direction and spur new ideas. With youth baseball, FUN should be the number one goal. If the kids don't have fun, then they won't continue to play when they are older. With that said, there is no reason that good fundamentals can't be taught while still having fun! The purpose of this guide is to help provide some direction and uniformity in teaching the fundamentals of youth baseball. Hopefully, once these youths become young adults, they will have a solid foundation of skills that can be improved and expanded in high school, college, and who knows...!

There is a plethora of baseball information available on the Internet. A lot of the following information is from QCBaseball.com. This website has a lot of good information, and several additional coaching drills that will help develop different skills. If you have computer access, please visit this site and others for more great information. Remember, not everything will be appropriate for everyone. Find some drills and exercises that work for you. Encourage your kids to practice at home. Make up things to emphasize certain fundamentals you are working on. Don't forget, there is no reason that the players can't improve while having fun as well.

The basics of baseball: throwing, catching, offense and defense are all paramount to a good team. In youth baseball, coaches will often discover that many players are not at a skill level that they expected. Focus on teaching basics, and getting everyone on the same page with fundamental baseball. Have age appropriate expectations. Take players with good fundamentals and make them great. Take players with no fundamentals, and make them good. In youth baseball, it is often too early to have coaches determine where players should or will end up playing when they are older. Take pride in developing players that can play multiple positions! With good, uniform instruction by all coaches involved, the youth baseball program can only get more talented each year. Also, with a good structure in place teaching sound fundamentals, the youth baseball program should get more self-sustaining. In the end, each year we should be passing on more and more talented baseball players so that, in high school and in college, coaches have players with sound fundamentals already in place.

The teaching of baseball fundamentals at a young age is **Absolutely Necessary** if we want our local high school to be successful. This learning of fundamentals starts now in our Youth Baseball Association.

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What this Notebook Needs:

Utilized; and when needed, modified and amended by future coaches and concerned parents

Throwing The Baseball

Don't assume that playing catch is a skill already learned. That's the assumption of many coaches. You may have a couple of kids that play catch on a regular basis, but most kids don't touch a baseball between practices. Video games and TV normally win out over going outside and playing catch. The result for most coaches is that players are often lacking fundamental skills that many of us expect them to have.

Entire Body

When kids are taught to throw, often the instruction is watered down into just a couple of steps. The act of throwing a baseball is not that simple. Throwing requires the entire body to work together in order to throw the ball accurately. All positions on the field require the ability to throw the ball accurately. Good throwing mechanics will enable you to make plays. When you warm up with the team before practice or play catch in the back yard, make sure you work on your mechanics and strive to improve your accuracy.

Grip



The best way to grip the ball is across the seams as pictured to the right. The fingers are placed over the top of the seams to provide a good grip on the ball. In the first picture you'll notice that you can see 2 seams running horizontally. The back of the ball not visible will also have 2 seams running horizontally. By gripping the ball in this fashion, those 4 seams will help to keep the ball in the air longer and keep the ball traveling straighter.

It takes years of practice to be able to grip the ball across the 4 seams in this fashion when playing a position other than pitcher on the field. Players can work on this by throwing the ball into their glove and as they pull the ball out shift the ball to the correct grip. This takes practice and I wouldn't worry about it for younger players.

Try to keep the ball out on the fingertips not back in your hand. The second picture on the right shows the ball out on the fingertips. Gripping the ball in the palm of your hand and not out on your fingers will cost you velocity and accuracy. Younger players may need to grip the ball with three fingers instead of two, but unless their hands are very small they should still try to grip the ball out on the fingers.

Youth Coaching Advice

Young players will not be able to grip the ball across the seams while playing in the field. Work with your pitchers on getting the correct grip but have your other players work on other parts of their throwing mechanics. They can work on this skill when they get older. Do work with them on getting the ball out on the fingertips. This can be difficult with small hands, but it is still an important concept for them to understand.

Wrist



Many young players don't use their wrist much when throwing the ball. When the ball is brought back in the throwing motion, the wrist should be cocked back. This way the wrist can be used as part of the throwing motion.

Watch young players throw and you will see most will throw with a stiff wrist. It is very difficult to throw the ball accurately with a stiff throwing wrist. This is a skill that young players should work on from the start.

You can practice this skill by holding your throwing arm just above the wrist with your glove hand (see image). Bend your throwing arm at the elbow with your forearm vertical. Keeping your arm in this position, practice throwing the ball with just your wrist and fingers. It may feel strange at first, but keep working on this skill. The wrist and fingers play a major role in the accuracy and strength of your throw.

You can find more throwing drills in the [drills section](#).

Front Shoulder



When throwing you want your front shoulder to point in the direction of where you are throwing. So after fielding the ball you will be turning your body sideways and pointing your lead shoulder in the direction of the throw.

Arm Motion

You can think of the motion your arm makes when throwing the ball as a circular motion. If you're throwing a short distance, the circular motion will be smaller than when you are throwing farther, but it's still a circular motion. The circular motion will aid your throw by providing more natural momentum than simply bringing your arm straight back and then forward. The circular motion should begin when you're pulling the ball from your glove.

If you are playing outfield you will almost always be making a longer throw, so when you remove the ball from your glove, your arm and hand should drop down and by your back knee. This will provide you with the longest circular motion possible.

If you are making a shorter throw in the infield for example, you may take the ball out of your glove and move it back and down slightly. This will give you a circular motion appropriate for the distance.



It's important to have your hand on top of the ball as you pull it back and start your throwing motion.

How do you determine if you're throwing with a circular motion or not? One of the best ways to check yourself is to freeze occasionally after you pull the ball out of your glove. If you are bring it up and back for anything other than a very short throw, you are not using a good circular motion in your throw.

If you have been throwing incorrectly for a long time, then it is going to feel different throwing with a good circular motion. That is to be expected. Practice throwing this way all the time and it will soon feel natural and you should see increased accuracy and velocity.

Lower Body

If you follow the logic of having your front shoulder facing the target then you might have guessed that you also want your lower body lined up in the same manner. Your back foot should be perpendicular to the target and your hips should be closed and also pointing in the direction of the target.

Once you have everything lined up, you'll want to step toward the target with your lead foot, push off your back leg, and throw the ball using your entire body.

Rotation

In order to throw the ball so it won't tail, you want to make sure you throw it across all four seams with '12-6' rotation. '12-6' rotation refers to a clock. If the ball rotates from 12, straight down to where 6 would be on the clock, this would be considered '12-6' rotation. The next two images show an example of 12-6 rotation.



Unless you throw the ball straight over your head, you won't be able to get '12-6' rotation without moving your wrist. As the ball comes forward during your motion, you will want to twist your wrist to keep your hand as vertical as possible. This is the key to having good '12-6' rotation on the ball.

Catching The Baseball

Be Prepared

Tell your kids that when playing catch during practice or receiving a throw during a game; expect that the ball won't be thrown directly to them. If they start with that expectation then they will see the throw that isn't right to them as an opportunity to make a good play.

Position

When playing catch at the beginning of practice, use the time as an opportunity to practice not only throwing the baseball, but catching it as well. When waiting to receive the throw, start by putting yourself in an athletic position. It doesn't mean you have to be in the same ready position you would be when the ball crosses the plate, but you still want to have your knees slightly bent and your weight on the balls of your feet. Basically, you want to be ready to move.

Go To The Ball

Youth baseball players will often stand in one spot and stick their glove out hoping (or not caring) that their partner will catch it. Have them move into a position that gives them the best opportunity to catch the ball. If it's thrown over their head, get them to take a drop step and go after it. If it's thrown a few feet to their side, have them move and try and get in front of it. Playing catch gives them an opportunity to practice fielding and catching at the same time.

-Hands-

Have your players give a target to shoot for. Have them place both hands out in front of their chest prior to the player throwing the ball. This will give him an area to shoot for.

If the ball is thrown above their waist they should catch the ball with their thumbs together, closing their bare hand over their glove as they make the catch.

If the ball is thrown below their waist, catch the ball with their little fingers together and again close bare hand over glove as the catch is made.

Have Fun

If all this sounds dry and boring then all you need to do is turn playing catch into a little competition to make things interesting.

Have your players give targets to each other. The first one to hit the target 5 or 10 times wins. Alternate throwing groundballs to each other, the person receiving the throw will play first base. The first person to not field the ball cleanly or to pull the other person off the base with a bad throw loses.

With younger players it can be fun counting how many throws can be made back and forth without the ball hitting the ground.

In the end baseball should be fun and there's no reason you can't have fun and work on becoming a better player at the same time. Playing catch is certainly one opportunity to accomplish both.

Your Ability to Play Catch is a Critical Skill

Good defense revolves around a team's ability to throw accurately and catch the baseball. Watch any high school level team or below warm up in the outfield and you'll see players using poor throwing mechanics and running after poorly thrown balls. If playing catch is such a core skill for defense, why aren't players better at it? One of the primary reasons is that many coaches don't teach their players how to throw.

Base Running - Sliding

How many scabs and jammed wrists could be avoided if kids were taught at a young age how to slide properly. Don't assume because kids can slide that they know how to slide. That's like assuming a player can hit because he can swing a bat. The most important slide to teach is the bent leg slide. The biggest problem with the bent leg slide is that kids tend to slide on their side. The proper and less painful way to slide is on your butt. The second problem is that kids often want to put their hands down as they slide. This can lead to jammed fingers and wrists.

Bent Leg Slide

A good way to teach a bent leg slide is to teach it the way you teach many skills, in steps.



Start by finding out which leg is going to be bent during the bent leg slide. With the player standing have him stand on one leg and bend the other leg at the knee, bringing it behind the other leg.

Have the player raise both hands over his head.

Have the player start to squat, while he keeps his bent leg up, then sit down. The player will naturally roll back on his back and his feet will come up in the air. Although this won't happen when he slides, it will during this stage. When he has rolled back to a seated position, he should still have their hands up and his front leg should be bent not straight.

Once comfortable with this, have him take a couple steps and slide (I always practice sliding on grass). Then have them jog and slide and finally run full speed and slide.

Checkpoints for each step:

Hands should be above head not on the ground. Don't worry too much about how high the hands are. Keeping them above the head is used to avoid the natural reaction to put them on the ground. Player should be sliding on his butt, not side.

Front leg should be bent to allow for give when sliding into the base.

Unless you're stealing second, don't slide head first into second base. The chances of being stepped on and injured are too great. For younger players, the head first slide is not recommended for anything other than diving back to first. A head first slide puts you in a vulnerable position where it is easy to injure your hands, shoulders, and head. A good bent leg slide straight into the base is the best and safest way to get to the bag, protect yourself, and break up a double play.

Player's mistakenly think that a bent leg slide is performed by sliding on the side of the leg. The proper way is to slide on your butt. Practice sliding in grass and check the stains on your pants. If they are on the side of your leg, you're not sliding properly. Another common problem in sliding is putting your hand down during the slide. This is often the cause of jammed fingers, wrists, and sometimes shoulders. Get in the habit of sliding with your hands up. If you can remember to slide on your butt with your hands up, you will be sliding pain free from that point on.

Throwing/Catching Drills

Wrist/Elbow

Drill:

Wrist/Elbow (Throwing Series - Part 1)

Purpose:

Develops players' use of wrist and elbow along with emphasizing the correct grip on the baseball.

Equipment:

Baseballs

Setup:

Players pair up with gloves and 1 baseball for each pair.

Execution:



Players get on one knee about 6 feet from their partner. Have each player place their glove on the ground in front of them.

Start by showing the players the proper 4-seam grip on the baseball.

The player with the ball will get the proper grip on the baseball. The player will then bend his elbow and hold his forearm with his other hand.

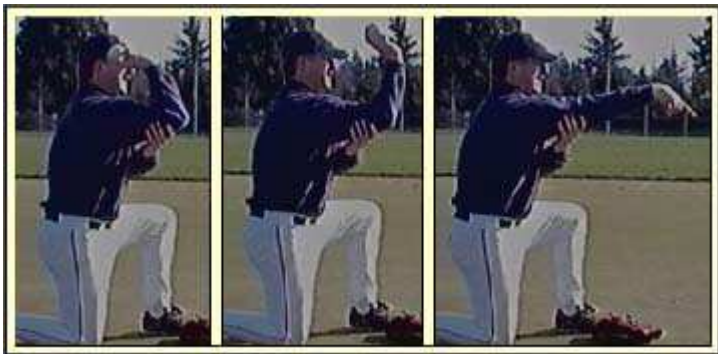
The player will then bend his wrist back and flick the ball to his partner using only the wrist to throw the ball. Emphasize that the wrist will be used during all throws.

Have players aim for the others players glove as a target.

Have the players back up to about 15 feet.

This time the player throwing the ball will place his other hand under his arm holding his triceps.

The player will then throw the ball using just his elbow and wrist.



One Knee

Drill:

One Knee (Throwing Series - Part 2)

Purpose:

Develops players' upper body throwing mechanics.

Equipment:

Baseballs

Setup:

Players pair up with gloves and 1 baseball for each pair.

Execution:

Players get on one knee (throwing arm side) about 15 feet from their partner. The player with the ball will rotate his shoulder toward the target, bring his arm back with his hand on top, use a good circular motion and throw the ball. Build on the wrist and elbow drill, making sure the player bends his elbow and uses his wrist.



Stationary

Drill:

Stationary (Throwing Series - Part 3)

Purpose:

Players learn how to line up their body and follow through when throwing the baseball.

Equipment:

Glove and Baseballs

Setup:

Players pair up with gloves and 1 baseball for each pair.

Execution:

One player will get in the proper position to catch the ball and give the other player a target. Player with the ball will place his back foot facing perpendicular to the target. Make sure he has lined up his body in the direction of the throw. He will then step and throw to the other player. Remind the players that this is a continuation of the other throwing drills.

This drill shows them how to place their back foot and close their front side before making the throw. Check the position of the back foot and whether they are pointing their front shoulder and hip toward the target.

Check to make sure they are following through on their throw. The throwing hand should end up down by the knee of the front leg.

Step and Throw

Drill:

Step and Throw (Throwing Series - Part 4)

Purpose:

Players learn how to catch the baseball and then step and line up to throw in a single movement.

Equipment:

Glove and Baseballs

Setup:

Players pair up with gloves and 1 baseball for each pair.

Execution:

Both players will get in the proper position to catch the ball. Player with the ball will step forward with his throwing side leg placing down in front of him perpendicular to the target. As he places his foot down he bring his back leg forward, swiveling his body as he does this, to get lined up in the correct throwing position. As he completes the step with his back leg, he will throw the ball. Remind the players that this is a continuation of the other throwing drills.

This added step will often result in younger players not getting their back foot positioned perpendicular to the target. Make sure you watch the placement of the foot and that they still close the body and point it toward the target.

Shuffle Throwing

Drill:

Shuffle (Throwing Series - Part 5)

Purpose:

Players learn how to shuffle in order to get their body in position to throw and to gain momentum toward the target.

Equipment:

Glove and Baseballs

Setup:

Players pair up with gloves and 1 baseball for each pair. Since you want the players to gain momentum toward the target, make sure they have warmed up their arms and are making a long enough throw.

Execution:

Have the player with the ball place it on the ground in front of him. He will then simulate fielding a ground ball. Once he has fielded the ball he will take a couple shuffle steps toward the target getting his body in good throwing position as he does so. After a couple shuffle steps he will step and throw.

Make sure the player is getting his body lined up as he performs the shuffle steps. His lead shoulder and hip should be pointing towards the target. As he gets lined up his back foot should land perpendicular to the target.

Workup Game

Drill:

Workup Game (Throwing Series - Combined)

Purpose:

Competition to work on all portions of the throwing series with the emphasis on accuracy.

Equipment:

Glove and Baseballs

Setup:

Players pair up with gloves and 1 baseball for each pair. Have one group stand stationary on a foul line. Have the other group start about 6 feet away (depending on age and skill level) on one knee ready to throw with his wrist only.

Execution:

This is a throwing accuracy competition. Each pair will make the same amount of throws as every other pair. You don't want this to be a race. With the players in position as described above have them wait for you to say 'go' or blow a whistle. They will throw to their partner with just the wrist and the partner will throw back. If they can do this without dropping the ball, they can move back a few feet and then use elbow and wrist to throw.

They will workup through the throwing series stages. If a ball is dropped they have to keep at that stage until they are successful. First pair to complete will win. You can do a number of variations depending on age and skill.

Long Toss

Drill:

Long Toss

Purpose:

This drill helps build arm strength for all players.

Equipment:

Baseballs; Watch and cones if playing the game.

Setup:

Two lines of players paired up.

Execution:

Each pair is a team competing against other pairs.

Make sure all players have properly warmed up their arms. This is not a game to get warmed up.

Set a time limit on the game. I usually set the time limit for 2 minutes and play the game 5 times.

Players will start out a certain distance away. Set a few cones so that distance is set.

Set more cones behind those cones in increments of about 5 yards.

Players throw the ball back and forth, 1 throw each. If the ball doesn't hit the ground, the player on the side of the cones moves back to the next cone.

Players continue to move back as long as the ball doesn't hit the ground.

If the ball hits the ground, the player on the side of the cones must go back to the original cone and start over.

At the end of 2 minutes, the team that is the farthest away wins.

To make the game more difficult have the player catching the ball anchor a foot the way a first baseman does when covering the base. If either player has to pull his foot to catch the ball, the team cannot advance to the next cone. To make it even harder, have the team start over if either player has to pull his foot to catch the ball.

Relay Throwing Race

Drill:

Relay Throwing Race

Purpose:

This is a fun team competition that helps players develop good footwork, a quick transfer of the ball from the glove to the hand, and a quick release.

Equipment:

Baseballs

Setup:

2 or more lines of equal teams. Have the players space themselves equal distances apart; determine spacing based on age and average throwing ability. Start with a distance that will allow them to focus on footwork and transferring the ball, not running down an errant throw.

Execution:

Start the ball on the same side of the line.

On your signal the player with the ball will throw the ball to the next player in line. The team will continue to throw it down the line from player to player.

Once the ball has got to the end of the line, the ball will be thrown back down the line to the start.

First team to get the ball back to the start wins.

Play the game a few times increasing the distance between the players each time.

Base Running Drills

Relay Race

Drill:

Relay Race

Purpose:

This is a good conditioning drill and helps players work on making good turns when taking extra bases.

Equipment:

2 baseballs

Setup:

Split your team into 2 equal squads. Have half the team at home and half at second.

Execution:

Have the first player in line start with the ball in his hand.

On your signal each team will start running around the bases. After each player runs around the bases, he will hand the ball to the next player. First team to get all players completely around wins.

To add a level of difficulty and decision making, use tennis balls and let the players throw the ball to the next player anytime after he has rounded the last base.

Shallow Fly Balls

Drill:

Shallow Fly Balls

Purpose:

Working on tagging up and coming off the third base on shallow fly balls

Equipment:

Baseballs and batting helmets

Setup:

Have a catcher, 2 third basemen, 2 shortstops and 2 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.

Catcher Drills

Hockey Goalie

Drill:

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.

Throwing to 2nd base

Drill:

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, stopwatch

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 stopwatch when the ball hits the glove and stop the stopwatch 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.

This drill can be used when throwing to other bases as well.

Infield Drills

1st Baseman- Covering 1st Base

Drill:

Covering First

Purpose:

This drill helps your first baseman work on covering first base and the footwork required to receive the throw.

Equipment:

Baseballs

Setup:

Have first basemen in a line at their position.

Execution:

Coach will stand midway between first and second.

First player in line will run to first and get in position to receive the catch. Coach will deliver a throw trying to alternate the location of the throw so players can work on footwork in all directions.

Once a player has caught the ball he will throw it back to the coach and go to the end of the line.

As players go through the line, coach should move to simulate throws coming from other positions.

Double Play Workup

Drill:

Double Play Workup

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.

Equipment:

Bat and Baseballs

Setup:

Have players take a position in the infield.

Execution:

Start by hitting the ball to the third baseman. He will then throw to second to start the double play. If he miss plays the ground ball or makes a bad throw, he will go to the end of the line, which in this game is first base. The player who has been at the other positions the longest will move up to the next position. First to second; Second to shortstop; Shortstop to Third.

Continue to hit ground balls to all other positions as you would during a normal infield.

To keep it moving and give everyone the same number of ground balls, don't hit more than one ball to each player. So if a shortstop makes an error and has to go to first, don't hit another ground ball to him at first.

Ground Ball Competition

Drill:

Ground Ball Competition

Purpose:

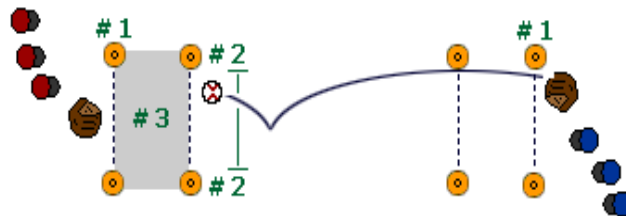
This is a fun competition game for working on fielding grounders and getting in the proper position to field the ball.

Equipment:

8 cones or throw down bases or chalk to define playing area; baseball

Setup:

Split group into 2 teams. Maximum of 3 or 4 on each team. Can be played with as few as 2 players (1 on 1 game).



1 Player is playing at a time for each team.

Both players must start behind back cone or line.

Player with the ball starts the game by throwing the ball toward the player on the other team. Rules for throwing are:

Ball can bounce any number of times before getting to the other team.

If thrown in the air, it must be caught or hit the ground before going over the back line. (See #1 in illustration above)

Ball must be thrown between the cones. (See #2)

First player in the line from the other team must move forward and field the ball anywhere in the fielding area. He doesn't have to let it bounce as long as he stays in the fielding area. (See #3)

Once he has fielded the ball, he becomes the thrower and throws the ball back to the player on the other team. He then goes to the end of the line.

Scoring - Points are given for mistakes and can be given to either the throwing or fielding team. The goal is not to get points. 1 point is added to the team total for each of the following:

Ball is not fielded cleanly (defined as not hitting the ground after hitting the glove or other body part)

Ball is fielded outside of the fielding area.

Throwing team throws the ball outside the fielding area.

First team to 10 points loses.

Notes: You can add additional rules based on what you want them to work on. If you want them to work on fielding the ball in front of them, have a rule that the ball must travel over the back line in play or it is considered a throwing error. This prevents players from trying to cut the corners with the throw. Now, if you would like them to work on fielding balls to the side as well as in front, allow throws to be legal as long as they hit once in the fielding area.

Carnival Grounders

Drill:

Carnival Grounders

Purpose:

Players get practice fielding grounders while moving toward the ball. Helps them concentrate on fielding and making an accurate throw.

Equipment:

balls and cones or other equipment to mark off starting and scoring area.

Setup:

Players will start at a specific spot; outfield grass will work if you have it. Otherwise use a couple of cones or something else to mark the starting spot. Scoring area for younger players will need to be set up similar to image 1 below.

Execution:

This is a fun game to play with 2 to 4 players at a time. Emphasize with your players to work on the rhythm of moving toward the ball, going down to field it, and making the throw in a smooth motion.

First player up will start on line and coach will hit or throw a ground ball (ball should be hit at a speed that will allow the player to move toward the ball). Player will move in, field the ball and make a throw to first base.

Scoring:

Younger players should have multiple ways to score points (See image 1 below). You can modify the scoring based on the skill level. Tee ball kids for example you may allow the ball to roll between the cones and get full points. Coach pitch, you could give them more points if it's in the air. With older players, that you expect to make accurate throws, just use a player at first base.

Young Players (image 1)

Use 3 lines and cones that narrow as they get closer to first.

Player throws it between first set of cones they get 1 point. Second set 2 points.

Third set 3 points.

If the ball gets by them, they can still make a throw from the starting point, but they get 1 point taken away.

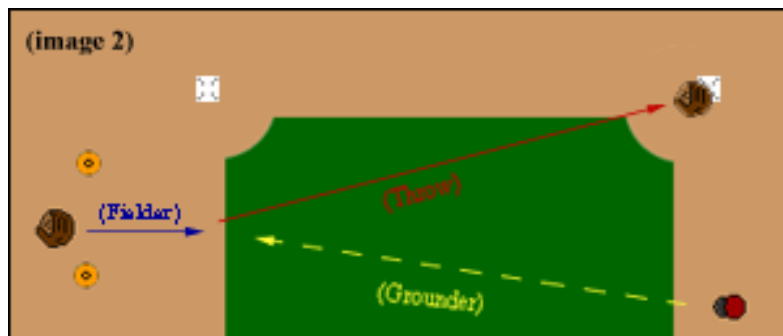
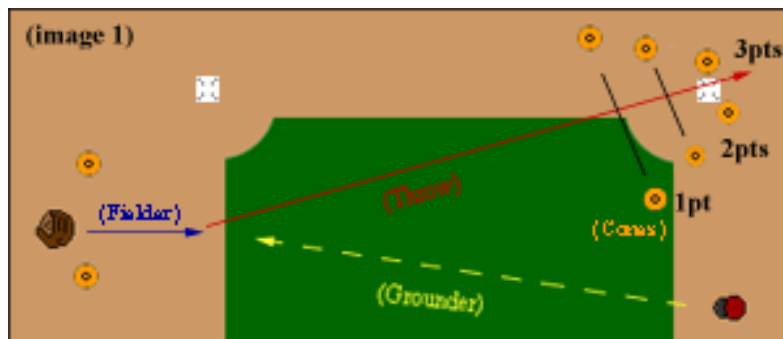
Older Players (image 2)

Player or coach can play first base.

On target in the air, 2 points. Overthrow or pulling the first baseman Player bounces it to first base, but on target, 1 point. Player throws it off of first, no points.

With older kids they cannot make a throw if the ball gets by them. Take 1 point away from the total if they don't field the ball cleanly, but keep it in front of them.

Play complete rounds, until a player reaches a score of 15 or 20 depending on skill level. If more than one player is tied at the end of the final round, all players continue 1 round at a time until 1 player wins. This will keep everyone involved throughout the entire game and could allow a player to catch up in the extra rounds.



Round the Horn

Drill:

Round the Horn

Purpose:

This drill simulates throwing down runners, double plays, fielding grounders. Kids really enjoy it.

Equipment:

Infield area with bases and balls.

Setup:

All infield positions are used except for the pitcher. You can use this drill with 5 or rotate more players in.

Execution:

Players - all infield except for pitcher. (can rotate more in if you want, but only 5 active each time around).

Everyone plays their position

Ball starts with the catcher and throws to 3rd to simulate a steal throw down

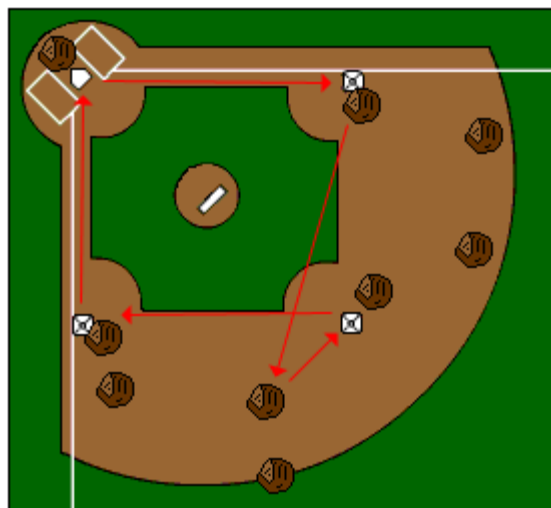
3rd throws a grounder to 2nd who fields the ball and flips it to the SS covering 2nd

The SS throws to 1st

The 1st baseman throws to catcher

After 2 successful rounds (or whenever), players rotate. Keep rotating until all players have played all positions

You can make this deal into a team competition by keeping track of errors and who made them. Players try to finish drill with no errors.



Bucket of Balls

Drill:

Bucket of Balls

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. Empty the balls near home plate and count them before the drill starts or keep track of errors. 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 and then over to 3rd and in the bucket.

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.

Egg Throw

Drill:

Egg throw/soft hands technique drill

Purpose:

Allow infielders to work on developing soft hands when catching the ball

Equipment:

Raw Eggs!!!

Setup:

Take a raw egg and have myself and another coach stand about 5-10 feet apart.

Execution:

As I toss the egg to my coach, I show them that in order for him to catch the egg without breaking that he must have soft hands and catch it gently while at the same time he must sweep the egg in his hands into his belly. The same as pulling the glove up from a grounder and sweeping the glove up into your belly before throwing. To make my point even further, I make sure an egg breaks on me as I catch it showing how "hard hands" and "stiff arms" are the improper way to receive an egg/ball.

I've only had one egg break in 2 years with these boys. During practices and games I will tell remind them "to get set and have egg hands". They know exactly what I mean and it's worked beautifully for me over the years. It has made my teams be very aware of how important it is to be relaxed, soften their hands and pull their glove into their belly before throwing.

Outfield Drills

Drop Step—Inside Step

Drill:

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.

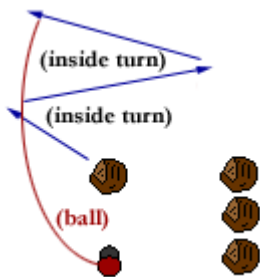
Equipment:

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.

Drop Step—Turn your back

Drill:

Drop Step - Turn Your Back

Purpose:

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

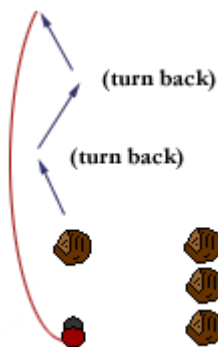
Equipment:

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 a 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.

Get the Angle

Drill:

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.

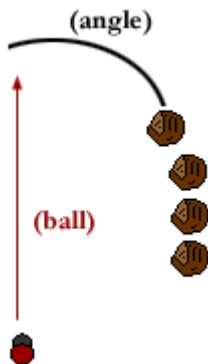
Equipment:

Baseballs

Setup:

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

Team Cutoffs

Drill:

Team Cutoff

Purpose:

Base running, team cutoffs and defensive situations

Equipment:

Baseballs and batting helmets

Setup:

Split the team into 3 groups of 4. Have a catcher and 3 outfielders in 1 group, infield positions in another group and 4 base runners.

Execution:

Start with a runner at home and hit fly balls and line drives into the outfield. Have a third base and first base coach and all players should act like it's a game situation.

After each ball is thrown in, have the defense hustle back to their positions, call out the number of outs and the situation. This should just take just a few seconds and then you're ready to hit the next ball.

After a few minutes have the groups rotate, giving each group a chance at each spot.

Coaching Note: Younger players will make many mistakes in this drill. It could be easy to find yourself in a situation where you spend more time talking than the kids do playing. Resist the urge to correct every problem and instead talk about mistakes that you see multiple times when you rotate.

Fly Ball Communication

Drill:

Fly Ball Communication

Purpose:

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

Equipment:

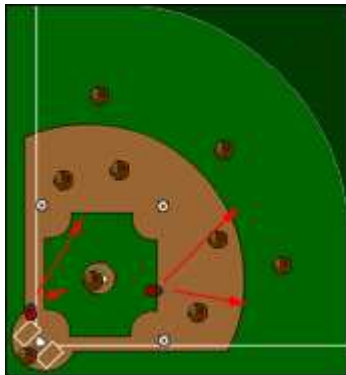
A few baseballs

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.



Team Drills

Soft Toss Scrimmage

Drill:

Soft Toss Scrimmage

Purpose:

Fun quick paced game that allows players the opportunity to play many different positions.

Equipment:

Game equipment

Setup:

Split your team into 2 squads. One will play offense, one defense, just like a regular game. Since each team will be short of a full defensive team, let the defensive players determine how they will set up their defense. We usually go without a pitcher and catcher. No bunting or stealing allowed.

Execution:

The name of the game is movement. We play 6 outs per half inning.

The coach will soft toss each pitch to the hitter from the side. The hitter must swing at each pitch.

After each hitter, the defense will rotate one position. We rotate around the infield from 1st to 3rd, then to left field and around to right. The right fielder will then move to first.

3-2 or 2-1 Scrimmage

Drill:

3-2 or 2-1 Scrimmage

Purpose:

This scrimmage is designed to speed up the pace of a normal scrimmage and put pressure on the pitcher to throw strikes and the hitter to swing.

Equipment:

Game equipment

Setup:

Split your team into 2 squads.

Execution:

Decide on a 3-2 or 2-1 count to start each hitter. This will depend on age and how far you are into the season.

Other than the count you will be playing a normal scrimmage.

This scrimmage forces the pitcher to try and throw a first pitch strike. There is no room for error especially with older players that start off 3-2. This drill also helps players go up to the plate with the attitude that they are going to have to swing the bat.

Bat Selection

Bat Selection

When you see a bat, it will usually have 3 different #'s associated with it. The length, the weight, and bat drop.

Bat drop is the difference between the length and weight of the bat. A 30"/18oz. bat has a bat drop of -12. A 30"/23oz. bat has a bat drop of -7. The higher the bat drop the easier it is to swing and the more you will pay for the bat. When purchasing a bat it can be an important factor in determining the size to purchase. A player may not be able to use a 30"/23oz., but may be fine with a 30"/18oz. If you are going to purchase a lower drop, be aware that the player may need a shorter bat.

The indicators below will give you a *general* idea based on height and weight of what size bat would work. Everyone is different, and there is no magic formula. Use the table to help determine a good starting point. After that, see if the player can hold the bat out in front of them with the top hand in their batting grip for 20 seconds without shaking. If so, then that is a good indicator of appropriate weight of the bat.

<u>AGE</u>	<u>LENGTH</u>
5-7	24-26 inches
8-9	26-28 inches
10-11	28"-30"
11-12	30"-32"
13-14	31"-32"
15-16	32"-33"
17+	34"

(8-10 year olds)

<u>Child's Height:</u>	<u>Bat weight:</u>
>48 inches	>16 ounces
>50 inches	>16.5 oz
>52 inches	>17 oz
>54 inches	>17.5 oz
>56 inches	>18 oz
>58 inches	>18.5 oz
>60 inches	>19 oz

11-12 year olds

>70 inches	>18 oz
>80 inches	>19 oz
>90 inches	>19.5 oz
>100 inches	>20 oz
>120 inches	>21 oz
>130 inches	>21.5 oz
>140 inches	>22 oz
>150 inches	>23 oz

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