

How to Organize and Run a Practice

Updated March 5, 2006

- **Involve the parents / Match up the players**

- Use a parent as one half of throwing drills. A parent can control the throws and make it easy for the player to catch. As the players progress, the ball can be moved up and down, and in and out.
- Build confidence in younger players – Help get them over fear of the ball
 - Teach correctly from the start. Yes, you may have to train the parents too!
 - Above the waste “thumbs together”, below the waste “pinkies together”. Always palms forward for a large target.
 - Use what it takes – a ball of socks, then a tennis ball, then a reduced injury factor (RIF) ball, before introducing a hardball.
 - Use “targeted catching” to help struggling players

- **Plan ahead, write it down, stick to it**

- **Cover the six fundamentals each practice using drills**

- Use stations to keep all players busy
- Break into groups of 3 or 4, rotate through stations
- All players need repetition to improve
- 6 basic skills:
 - Hitting – Off a tee, soft toss, in the batting cage, bunting if appropriate
 - Throwing – 3 cone drill, target practice, around the horn, relay lines
 - Catching a thrown ball – 6 position drill, move to the ball, footwork
 - Fielding a ground ball – Roll the ball (regular and backhand)
 - Catching a pop fly – Crossover step, drop step, quarterback toss
 - Running the bases – General base running, sliding, steals
- Older players must also practice pitching

- **End practice with a fun activity when you can**

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- **General Practice Outline**

Warm up: Light jog, stretching exercises, and calisthenics	10 minutes
Throwing and catching drills (entire team)	10 minutes
Drill stations – Hitting, fielding, pop flies (10 minutes at each station)	30 minutes
Base running (entire team)	10 minutes
Team defense – Infield and outfield practice and defense strategy	20 minutes
Game or fun activity	10 minutes

Games / Activities

Ping

Players are divided into two teams. The coach pitches to all batters. A batter gets one good pitch to hit. The hitting team scores a run when a hit ball touches the outfield grass. The defending team usually lines the infield just in front of the outfield grass. A batter either scores by hitting a ball that touches the outfield grass or makes an out. An out is made by a called strike, a swinging strike, a foul ball, a hit that doesn't reach the outfield grass, or the ball is stopped or caught without touching the outfield grass. Each team gets three outs per inning.

Home run derby (fungo batting)

A player gets 3 swings to hit balls over the fence. The player tosses a ball up himself and hits it as a coach would do with a fungo bat. If the ball goes over the fence, the player scores a run. Play as many innings as desired. For younger players, let them hit from second base or the outfield.

Base chase

Divide the players into two teams. Place one team at home, and the other at second base. When the coach says "go" one player from each team begins running the bases, trying to catch the player on the other team. When a player crosses the base where he started, the next runner on his team starts his trip around the bases.

Wiffle ball

Divide the players into two teams and play wiffle ball. Decide if you want any special rules since there won't be enough players for two full teams, such as "soak-ems" being allowed between third base and home since you won't want to use a player as a catcher.

Center field to home accuracy throw

Put a target at home plate - a bucket laid on its side works well. Have players throw three balls at the bucket, trying to get the ball into the bucket or as close as possible. Have younger players throw from second base or some other age appropriate spot.

"Back 'em up" long toss

Divide the team into pairs of players. Each pair needs a ball. Put one player from each pair in a line (line A), and the other player from each pair in another line (line B) about 30' (or some appropriate distance) apart. The balls start with the players in line A. When the coach yells "Throw", players in line A throw to their partner in the line B. If the ball hits the ground, the pair is out. The players in line B hold the balls and wait for the command to "Throw", throwing back to their partner in line A. If the ball hits the ground, the pair is out. After a couple throws by each line, have the players take a few steps backward and repeat the process. The last team to make a throw without dropping the ball is the winner. The game can be made harder not allowing players to fall to the ground when catching a ball, only taking one step in any direction, or not allowing steps at all.

Volleyball

Divide the team into pairs of players. Have the players in each pair face each other about 5' apart. Using a baseball (or a softer ball if appropriate), have the pair play 'volleyball' by batting the ball to each other using their bare hands without letting the ball hit the ground. This promotes hand/eye coordination and quickens reaction times.

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Divide the team into pairs of players. Have the players in each pair face each other in two lines separated by an age appropriate distance. On the coach's command to throw, the players in one line throw to their partner who catches and holds the ball. If the partner catches the ball in front of his face, the pair scores 2 points. A ball caught in front of the chest scores 1 point. The coach continues to command the lines to throw. The first team to score 21 points wins. Make it more difficult by moving the lines farther apart and playing again.