



ESSENTIAL SOFTBALL

SKILLS AND DRILLS

34 Fundamental
Drills for Youth Softball

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INTRODUCTION

Practice makes perfect.

We have all heard that saying, and it really is true. Repetition of skills is the best way to get your players to perform better. Knowing what to do when the opportunity presents itself is one of the hallmarks of a good player. The more you practice, the more inclined your players are to do the right thing at the right time.

Skill development is essential to having a good ball team.

Practicing the drills included in this book are going to help your players continue to develop their playing habits and improve their overall skill level.

We have divided this book into four different skill areas that you can focus on:

- Fielding
- Base running
- Hitting
- Pitching

FIELDING DRILLS

DRILL #1 – BALL TO FIRST

Skill Level: Beginner

Purpose:

It is important for younger players to understand what happens when the ball is hit and it comes to them. Most will be focused on actually stopping the ball, but when they do secure it in their gloves, they need to know where to throw it.

Setup:

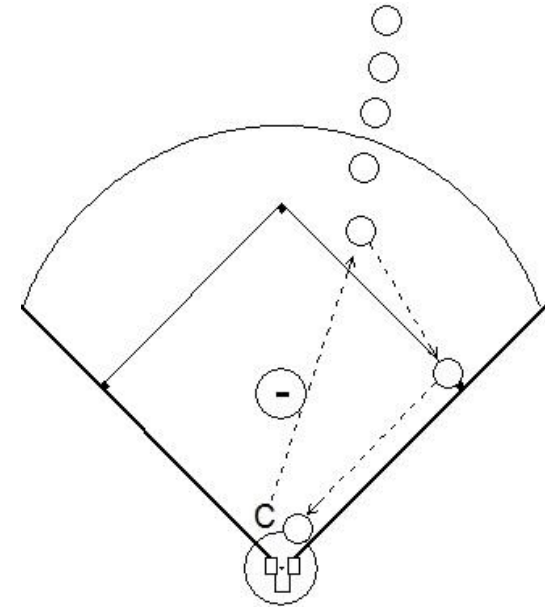
The players should have their gloves on and you can send them out to second base. Have one player play first base to field the throws. You can also have one near you (home plate) to field balls from first base to home.

Execution:

1. Toss or lightly hit the ball to the players in line at second base.
2. Players work on both fielding the ball and making a good throw to first.
3. The first baseman then throws the ball home.
4. Players can then rotate: the fielder goes to first, the first baseman goes to home plate, and then the 'catcher' will go to the back of the fielding line. Once the players get the hang of it, you might be able to just keep hitting in succession as all the players go through the drill.

Coaching Tips:

- Explain to your players that when they get the ball, one of the first places they are going to throw is first base.
- So players understand where all of the bases are, you can run this drill from any position on the infield, and throw to any base. Keep the throw length reasonably short (shortstop to 2nd or 3rd, 1st to 2nd etc.) for the younger players.



Players work on both fielding and throwing to the appropriate base in this team drill.

DRILL #2 – TAG OUT

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

Young players often understand how to get players out at first base and they may have also learned the basics of a force out play. But, they must also learn about tagging players out at bases. This drill teaches players the difference between a force out and a tag out.

Setup:

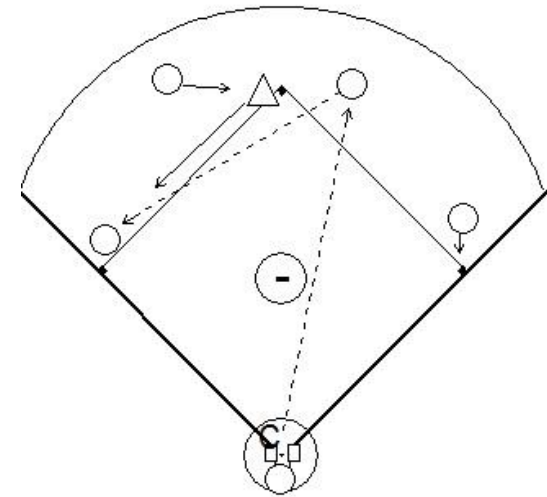
You will need players to fill the infield. Put a runner on second base to start.

Execution:

1. Hit grounders to the infield with the runner on second base. The players must understand that the player can stay at second or run. If the player runs, then they can go to third and make a tag out. If the runner doesn't go, then the infielder can look the runner off and then throw to first.

Coaching Tips:

- There are several different variations of this drill that your team can use. You can hit shallow fly balls into the outfield and then try and tag out the tagged up runner. You can hit line drives through the infield and if the players catch it, they have to throw to the base with the runner to try to get them out.



Players learn when to apply the tag in this drill which can also be run with balls hit to the outfield.

DRILL #3 – KNOW WHERE TO GO

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

Sometimes when the ball is hit, players just don't know where they are supposed to go. Often times, they will just sit around and watch the play develop and not go to where they really should be. This is a great drill to help them understand their responsibilities on the field.

Setup:

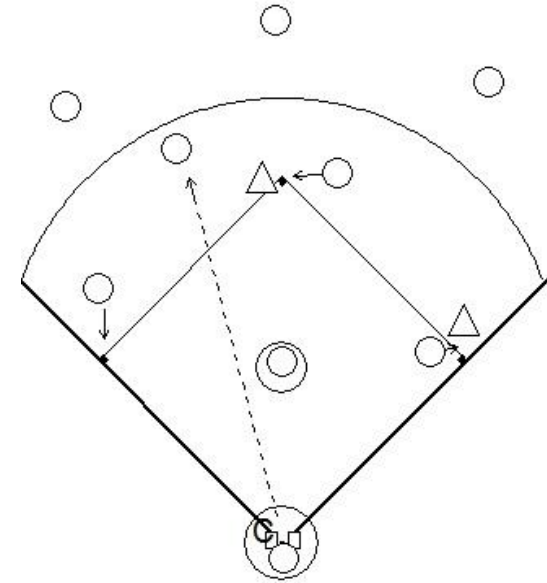
You need an entire infield to start, and you can add the outfielders later, and also you can switch up the situation by adding runners in different situations for the players on the field to see.

Execution:

1. As the players are in the field, you can call out situations (assuming the situations have been taught). For example, what happens when a player hits a dribbler up the first base line?
2. First base runs after the ball, then second base (or pitcher) covers first, short covers second, etc.
3. You can go through several situations to get the players used to realizing that they have a responsibility on the field. They aren't supposed to be just standing around watching what everyone else is doing.

Coaching Tips:

- Make a game of it by rewarding the players who get to their positions first, after a scenario is called out.
- Further, to make the drill more interesting, you can add batting into the mix. You can run two drills at once: this one, and batters trying to hit a ground ball through the infield. This will help both sides.



Players learn their positional responsibilities during different defensive situations in this drill.

DRILL #4 – CATCH & THROW

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

Outfielders learn the appropriate way to approach a fly ball – especially if there is a threatening runner on base.

Setup:

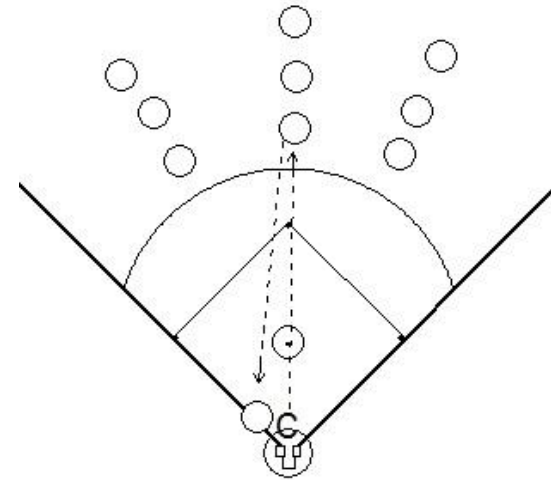
Set up three lines of players to indicate left, center and right fields. The coach should have a bat to hit fly balls to the players. One player may be used to snag balls for the coach.

Execution:

1. At first, you might want to start with the lines close, and just hit soft, low flies so the players can work on their footwork.
2. The footwork for this drill should be taught beforehand. It should be: back up a couple of steps behind where the ball is anticipated to drop, and keep one foot behind the other, ready to take a step forward to catch the ball with momentum.
3. Once they are ready to receive the ball, they should be stepping forward with their gloves prepared, and their throwing hand ready to get the ball. Just prior to catching the ball, the player should take a couple of steps into the ball to build momentum and then throw with the momentum.

Coaching Tips:

- It will take the players a little while to catch on, so at first you should only do the drill from about 25 feet away, and do short pop ups for them. As they gain confidence in preparing to throw right after the catch, you can move back and the fly balls can go higher.
- Also, you can actually add the runner that they have to throw out at second base.



Players learn to catch the ball with momentum and make good throws in this drill.

DRILL #5 – THROW THEM OUT

Skill Level: Advanced

Purpose:

This drill focuses on fielding the ball and making a good throw while there is a runner running to different bases.

Setup:

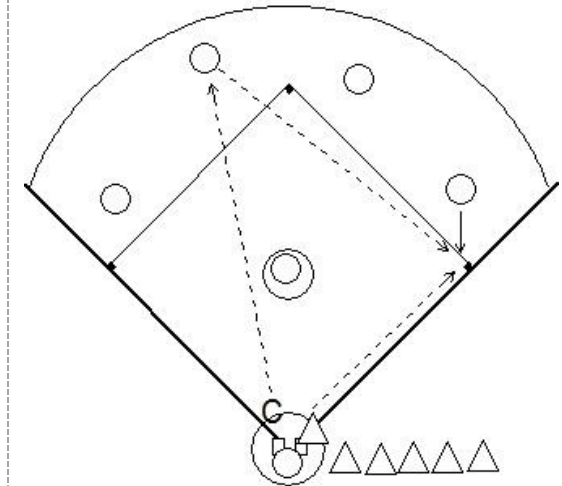
Field an entire infield to start this drill, along with a line of runners at home plate for when the coach hits the ball to the players.

Execution:

1. This is your standard throwing drill – except this one has a runner headed to first base. Now the pressure is on. The runners try to outrun the throw. The coach will go through each position and hit a grounder to them to field and throw to first base.

Coaching Tips:

- Award one point for the fielders if they can complete the out, or award a point for the runners that outrun the ball or make it to first base. Make it a competition between runners and fielders.
- What should be stressed is collecting the grounders, making solid and accurate throws, and then the ball needs to be caught.



This drill teaches players composure and reduces the chances they'll make game-losing errors in actual competition.

DRILL #6 – DOUBLE PLAY BALL

Skill Level: Advanced

Purpose:

The double play is one of the most exciting and effective plays in softball. It gets a team out of a jam when they need it the most. Here players learn to develop the excellent timing and seamless fielding that are needed to execute it effectively.

Setup:

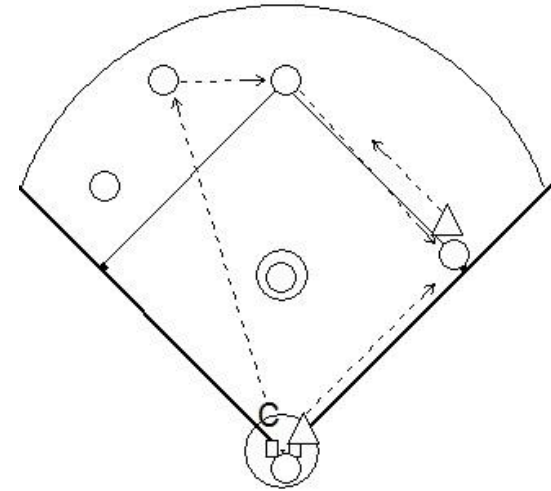
An entire infield is needed for this drill, along with a runner at first base (to start) and at home plate.

Execution:

1. The coach should hit balls to the different positions, and the players need to make the throw to second base and then turn it to first base for the double play. The runners will try to disrupt the play, and/or outrun the ball being thrown to their base.

Coaching Tips:

- You can add a little variation to the drill by having men on first and second (and home plate) and when the ball is hit, the players have to make the decision of whether they will take the lead runner (and double play) or if they take the easier double play and leave the lead runner.
- Further variations would also include having line drives hit and caught and then throwing to the bag where a runner was. For example, you can have a man on second and when the line drive is hit, the fielder attempts to catch the ball and then make the double play at second base.



Defense turns the 6-4-3 double play.

DRILL #7 – PEPPER

Skill Level: Advanced

Purpose:

This is a great drill to build hand-eye coordination, quick reaction and to teach players the value of knocking the ball down at all costs.

Setup:

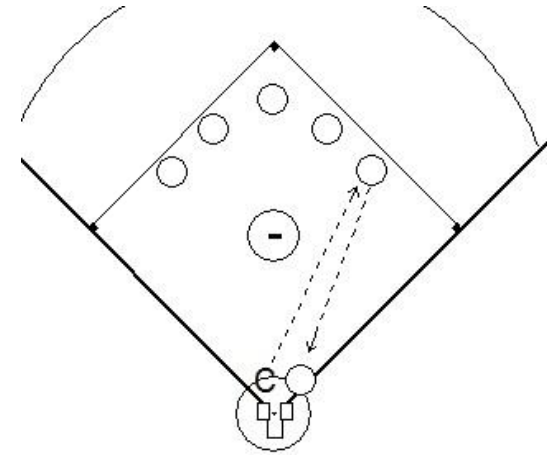
Have one or two groups set up with 5 or 7 players in a line facing the coach. Gloves on and players are spread out about 10 to 15 feet apart. One player should be snagging balls for the coach.

Execution:

1. The coach will be about 15 feet away from the player and will begin by hitting grounders and line drives to the players.
2. He or she does this in random order – the players do not know where the ball is going to be hit. They need to react quickly and then throw the ball to the player fielding balls for the coach.
3. The coach will hit the ball as quickly as he or she can to the different players.
4. Players are eliminated from pepper for missing balls or making errant throws.

Coaching Tips:

- Players must communicate with one another so there is no problem with collisions on the field. This happens in softball and can be eliminated if players talk to each other while on the field.
- The focus should be on: reading, reacting, and making a good throw to person collecting balls for the coach.



Players work on developing quick reaction times in this fast-paced drill.

DRILL #8 – CATCH THE FLIES

Skill Level: Advanced

Purpose:

In this drill, players learn the proper footwork and improve their range to catch fly balls that are not hit directly at them.

Setup:

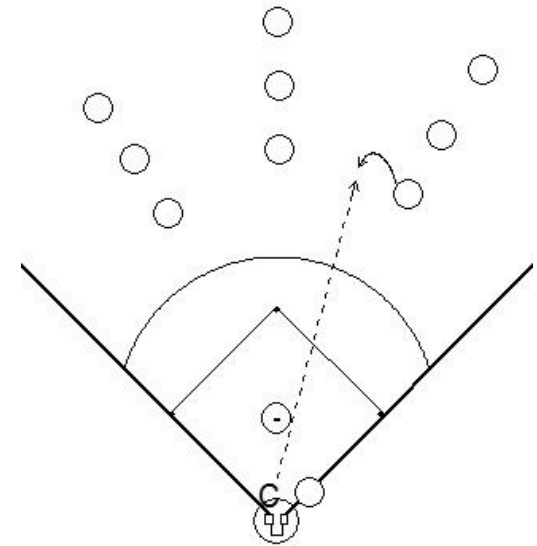
Line up the fielders in all three of the fields. Coach will hit the balls to the players.

Execution:

1. Prior to doing the drill the players should understand the fundamentals of catching high fly balls that are not hit directly to them. They should understand the proper 'stalking' of a fly ball. The coach should stress that the player take the first step with their glove side foot, and move quickly to anticipate the direction of the ball, and then get under it.
2. During the drill, coach will hit fly balls to the players.

Coaching Tips:

- Dropped balls are usually caused by improper approach to the ball and then a lack of concentration. Emphasize those areas and help your players learn by repetition.
- You can also use this drill to help players adjust to high fly balls. Many times players can misjudge these balls. Constant repetition is important in gaining an understanding of how the ball is going to travel.



Players work on taking the proper route to catch fly balls.

DRILL #9 – MAKE THE PLAY

Skill Level: Advanced

Purpose:

Softball has many different defensive combinations, and in this drill players gain an understanding of their responsibilities in different situations and how to make the right play when they are called upon.

Setup:

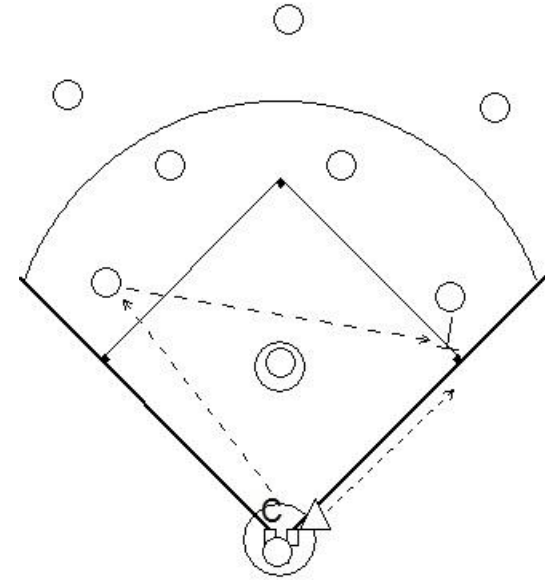
You need to field an entire defensive team for this drill. Along with that, you need one or two runners for this drill. The coach will be setting up different scenarios with the runners.

Execution:

1. This is your standard fielding drill, but with a twist. It isn't just a throw to first, although it could be. The coach can set up any number of different plays to cover. It could be a player stealing bases, a fly ball with a runner tagged up on third, or a potential double play ball, etc.

Coaching Tips:

- Don't let the fielders know what is going to happen next. That way they need to read and react to the play that is going on.



Defensive players must read the situation and make the right play.

BASERUNNING DRILLS

DRILL #10 – LEARN THE BASES

Skill Level: Beginner

Purpose:

When players first start playing, it is always a good idea to educate them about the different bases that are used. This drill will help ensure your young players don't run to a base other than the one they are supposed to.

Setup:

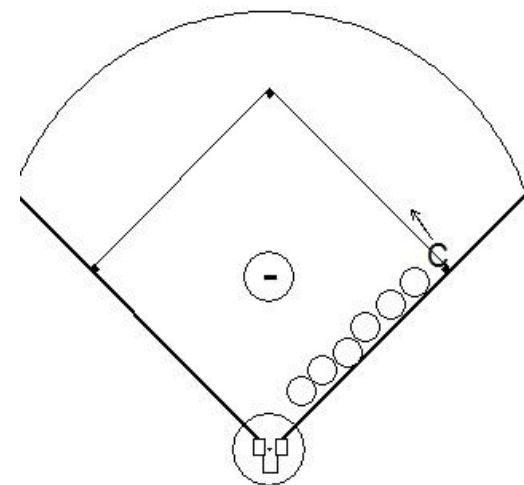
All you need for this drill is the attention of the players you are coaching.

Execution:

1. Have the players follow you from base to base, starting with first base, and then in order (second, third, home). Explain to the youngsters what happens after you hit the ball, and then where you go after first base, where to go after second, etc.

Coaching Tips:

- It would be a good idea to go through this drill a couple of times per practice, and then at least once during midseason practices and beyond. This will imbed that information in the players and hopefully prevent any embarrassing moments of running to the wrong base.



Players follow the coach around the bases.

DRILL #11 – BASE RELAY

Skill Level: Beginner

Purpose:

This is a competition between the players on the team to see who can run the bases in the proper order.

Setup:

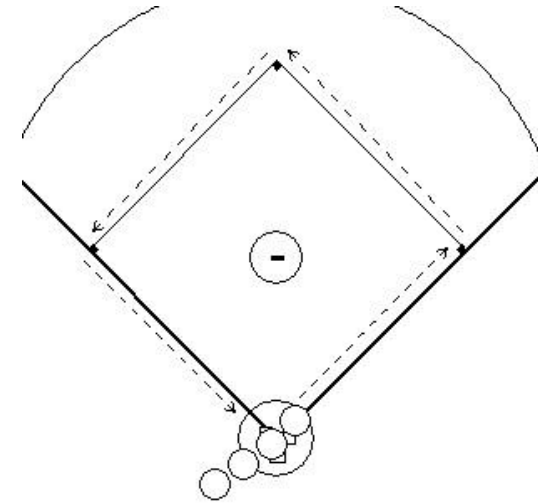
All of the bases should be securely fastened and ready for baserunners. Divide your squad into two teams of relatively equal speed.

Execution:

1. Have all of the players of one team line up at home plate. Then when the coach says go (and clicks a stopwatch), the first person has to run all of the bases in the proper order and then tag the next person in their line. Once all of the players have crossed home plate, you note the time on the stopwatch. Then the next team goes. The fastest team gets a reward.

Coaching Tips:

- Encourage the players as they run and make sure they are keeping their heads up and looking ahead of them instead of down at their feet.



Players learn to run the bases in the proper order as they compete against their teammates in this baserunning drill.

DRILL #12 – STAR WITH TWO

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

Players learn to run the bases properly with good speed and following a tight path so no time is wasted covering extra ground.

Setup:

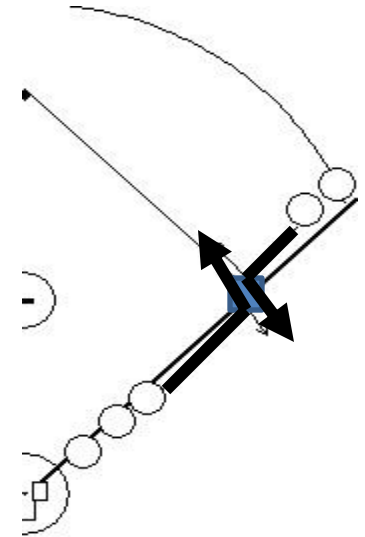
You will divide your team into two groups and they will be on opposite sides of the first base bag. They should be about 40 feet from the bag. The base should be secured.

Execution:

1. From both sides of the base, the runners run toward the base and then turn as though they were going to second base.
2. The key to this drill is for the players to take the best path to second base, and hit the bag with the proper foot.

Coaching Tips:

- The first couple of times you do this drill, it should be at a jog, so there are no injuries if players collide. As the players get more accustomed to the drill, they can increase the speed in which they round the bases.
- If you want to get a little more daring, you can have four lines going to each of the inside corners. Make sure you start at a jog to begin, otherwise you will most certainly have collisions.



In this drill, players learn to take a better angle to the next base, and they develop proper technique for running the bases quicker and more effectively.

DRILL #13 – TAG UP

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

Players often leave a bag too early or they don't even stay on the bag at all. This drill teaches players how to properly tag up on fly balls.

Setup:

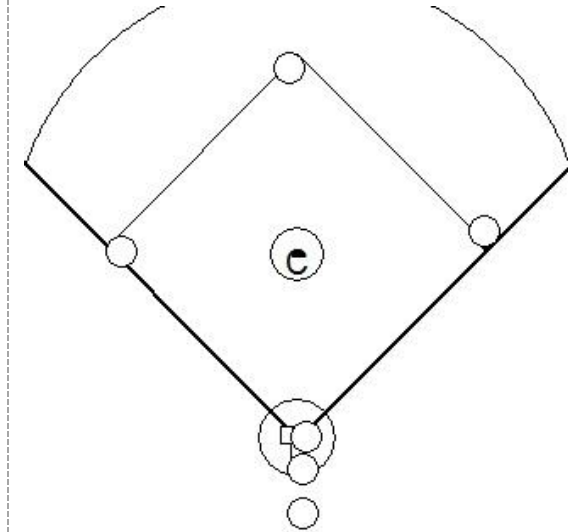
You will need runners on all three bases, with the rest of the players lining up at home plate waiting for their turn to run the drill. The coach will stand in the middle of the infield, on the mound.

Execution:

1. With all of the runners at their bases, they taking a leadoff to simulate when the ball leaves the pitchers hand. The coach will toss himself a high fly ball and while the players are waiting for the ball to come down, they plan their tag up for when the coach catches the ball.
2. Once the coach catches the ball, the players are prepared to advance to the next base.

Coaching Tips:

- Other coaches or players can sit and be the judge to see if players leave bases too early, or if they are not tagged up when the ball is caught.



Players learn to anticipate the ball being caught and tag up properly.

DRILL #14 – DOUBLE PLAY BREAK UP

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

Players learn to run toward the player instead of the base to break up a double play.

Setup:

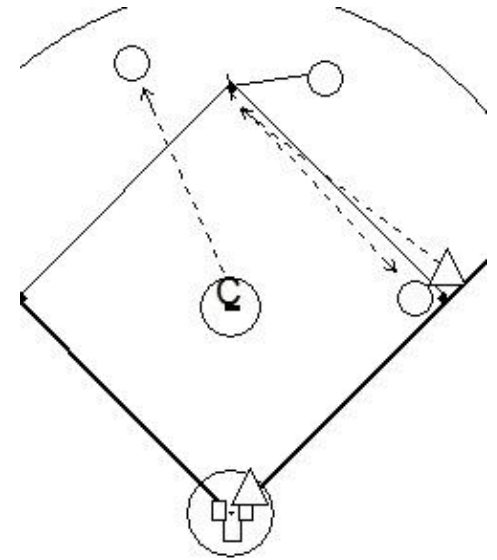
You need a shortstop, second baseman, a runner on first and second base secured in the infield. A player running from home plate to first is also needed. The coach will stand in the middle of the infield and roll grounders to the second baseman and shortstop.

Execution:

1. The runner at first must understand that they need to try to disrupt the flow of the double play at second base. To do this, they must anticipate which side the infielder will execute their throw to first at. Therefore, they must choose the left side or the right side of second base.
2. The coach will roll the grounders to the infielders and the runner must then decide which side to break the play up on. The infielders try to make the double play on the runners.

Coaching Tips:

- Usually, if the second baseman is throwing to first, the runner should slide to the left of the bag as the infielder goes over the bag as they run to it. If the shortstop is throwing, his or her momentum is usually taking them to the right side of the bag, so that's where the break up should occur.
- Make sure the runners don't stray too far from the bag, and don't go into their teammates too hard, as it can cause injuries.



Players learn to anticipate the side of the throw to first, and slide accordingly to break up the double play.

DRILL #15 – QUICK JUMP

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

Players practice getting the good jump they need to safely steal a base.

Setup:

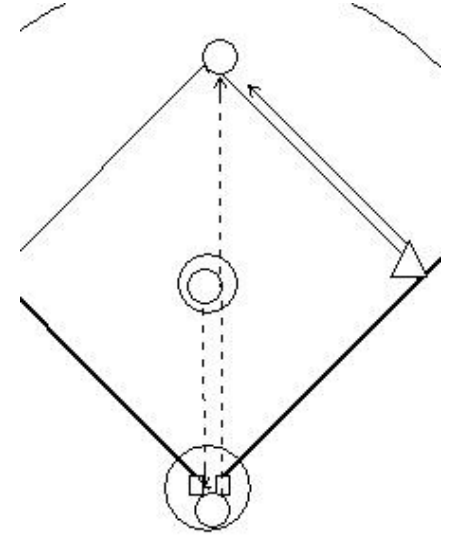
Pitcher, catcher, second baseman, runner.

Execution:

1. In this drill, the pitcher will go into their windup, and throw the ball to home plate.
2. The runner will have taken off and run towards second at some point during the wind up. The coach will help the players identify that 'move' towards home plate that signifies the delivery of a pitch, and the time to run to second.

Coaching Tips:

- If the runner gets a good jump they should make it to second every time. Safe runners score one point, runners tagged out – score one for the defense.



Your team's stealing percentage should rise by doing this drill as your players will learn the best time to get a jump on the pitcher.

DRILL #16 – RUN THROUGH FIRST

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

This drill teaches players to explode from the batter's box and then run through first. Many players slow their run to first early and as a result are out.

Setup:

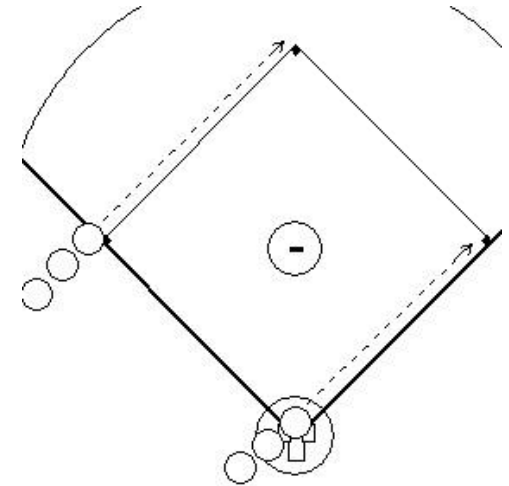
Runners at home plate and at third base. Two lines will form at these bases – one facing first base, and one facing second base.

Execution:

1. The player will stand at 'home plate', and take an imaginary swing. They need to explode from the batter's box and run towards first base (second base for the group using third base as home plate).
2. As they are running toward first, the players need to be aware of the following:
 - Picking a spot 5 yards past first base to run hard to
 - Upon reaching the bag a quick look down to make sure they touch the bag
 - Upon reaching the bag a quick look right to see if there was an overthrow and they can run to second base.

Coaching Tips:

- Make sure players are running through the bag instead of pulling up as they draw near.



Players get better at running to first base, and taking advantage of opportunities to take second on overthrows.

DRILL #17 – BASERUNNING RELAY

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

Running hard around the bases is important for the players to learn. This drill will keep them on their toes and have them compete against their teammates to stay ahead.

Setup:

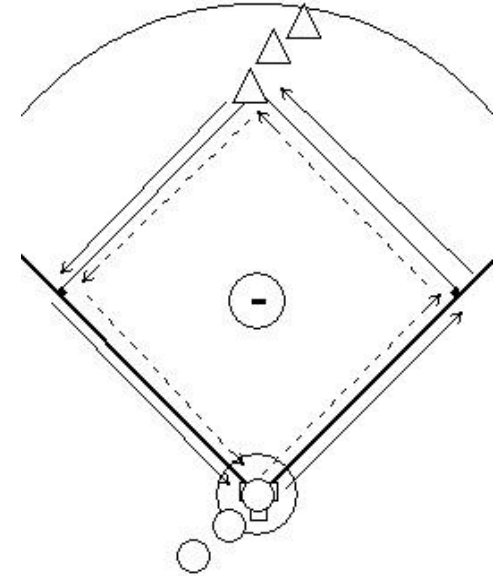
Two lines – one at home plate, the other at second base.

Execution:

1. On the coaches' signal for players to take off, the players on second sprint towards third, and then home, first, and back to second to tag their next teammate.
2. The runners from home do the same thing, only they round the bases in the correct order. The teams will continue to do this, tagging the next player in line when they reach their team bag, until one team overtakes the other rounding the bases.

Coaching Tips:

- Make sure players are running hard, following tight paths and keeping their heads up so they can see in front of them.



This drill is both a great conditioning drill and a great way for players to learn the value of running the bases as fast as they can.

HITTING DRILLS

DRILL #18 – FROM THE TEE

Skill Level: Beginner

Purpose:

Even professionals will go back to the basics of using a tee. It helps batters focus on the target area to hit a softball. In this drill, players use a tee to work on the fundamentals of hitting.

Setup:

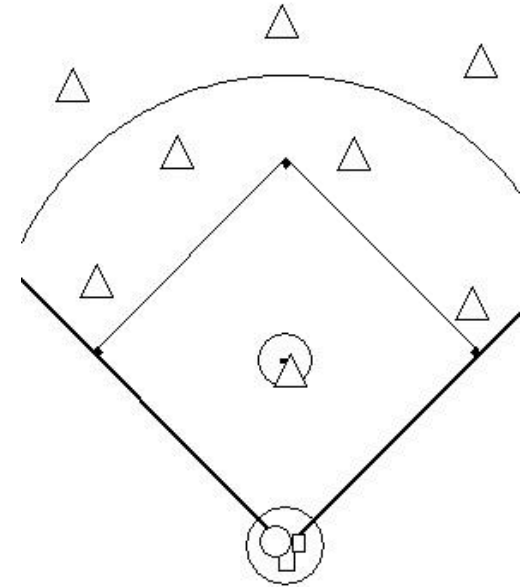
You need a batter, a tee and several balls. If you want you can put players in the field to practice fielding the hit balls.

Execution:

1. You can run this drill in a batting cage, against the backstop or with players in the field.
2. Raise or lower the tee to reflect the different heights in the strike zone.
3. This drill isn't intended for a player to smash the ball, but to iron out kinks in the swing.

Coaching Tips:

- Have players focus on hitting on top of the ball, striding towards the field (not the ball), swinging down on the ball and making solid contact.



This back to basics drill gets players focused on the basics of hitting instead of swinging for the fences. Above, the drill is run with fielders in place so they can also get fielding practice.

DRILL #19 – GROUNDER, POP UP, LINE DRIVE

Skill Level: Beginner

Purpose:

Knowing how to hit each of these balls will give the batter a better idea of why they are supposed to swing the bat the way they are instructed.

Setup:

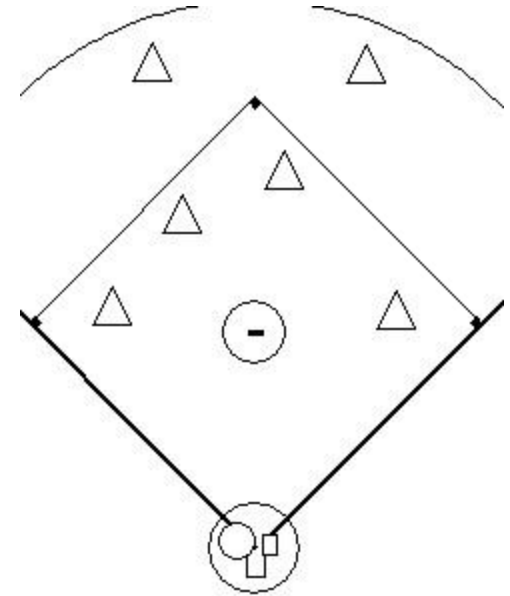
You need a tee with a ball, batter (with helmet), and you can have a few fielders to shag balls.

Execution:

1. You can demonstrate to the younger players what happens when you hit certain areas of the ball.
2. Also, you can show the players what happens when you swing a certain way (up, down, level).
3. Give each player the opportunity to hit off the tee and see what happens when they hit certain parts of the ball. Further, allow them to experiment with different types of swings.

Coaching Tips:

- Many of your players will want to swing for the fences, because home runs are the cool thing to do, but ensure them that once they can make contact on the ball wherever they want, then hitting for the fences is just around the corner.



Batters work on hitting different types of balls – grounder, line drive and a fly.

DRILL #20 – BATTER STANCE

Skill Level: Beginner

Purpose:

This drill helps players get in a proper and comfortable batting stance.

Setup:

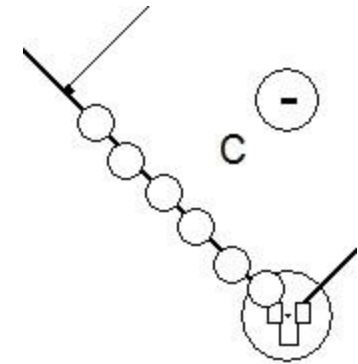
A group of 6 batters (with helmets and bats). Line the players up evenly spaced along the 3rd base line.

Execution:

1. Not as much a drill as it is a skill clinic, the coach will call out 'stance!' and all of the players will get into their batting stance.
2. The coach will then go through the line of players and make any adjustments the first few times.
3. After doing it three or so times, the coach can then call 'stance!' and if any of the players still need the same stance corrections, they are eliminated from the game.

Coaching Tips:

- Make sure players are balanced and comfortable and displaying good form. Repetition alone will be good for the younger players but a good stance is a key foundational element for successful hitting so also make sure players are focused on the drill at hand.



Players learn to get in the right batting stance.

DRILL #21 – BALLOON DRILL

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

This drill teaches players the right stride length to take when they are hitting.

Setup:

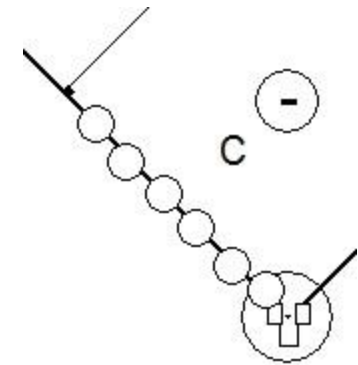
Line up 6 batters with nearly filled balloons. Don't fill the balloons up too much, as they will pop too easily. All batters should have bats and helmets to start.

Execution:

1. The balloon cannot touch the ground.
2. It should be placed between the thighs of the batter and then they should assume their batting stance.
3. When the batter strides forward on their swing, they need to keep the balloon from falling to the ground.

Coaching Tips:

- Balance is extremely important in making solid contact with the ball and will help a player develop hitting consistency. Striding too far (dropping the balloon) throws that balance off-kilter and doesn't allow for power hitting so watch for overstriding and correct it.



Players learn the importance of not overstriding when swinging the bat.

DRILL #22 – BUNT DRILL

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

The bunt is one of softball's lost arts, but it can come in very handy. In this drill, your players will learn to master this skill so that they can do it in a game when needed.

Setup:

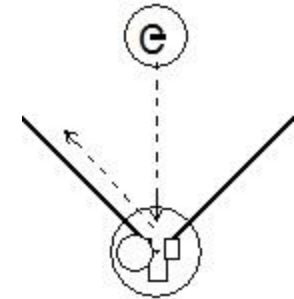
The coach will pitch to the players for this drill. The batter will stay at home plate with a bat and helmet.

Execution:

1. The coach can set up different point areas near the first and third baselines. For example, 5 pts for balls within 12 inches of the line, 3 pts within 24 inches and 1 pt within 36 inches.
2. Also, the ball should reach halfway down the baseline in order to collect points.

Coaching Tips:

- Stress to your players that if the ball is bunted too far, the third baseman has an easy out; likewise if it is too short, the catcher will be able to make the play.
- You can also add fielders to give your players practice fielding bunts.



Players work on getting the bunt down.

DRILL #23 – OPPOSITE FIELD/PULL HITTING

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

Teaches players how body position and timing can affect the direction their ball will travel. Helps them become better all-around hitters.

Setup:

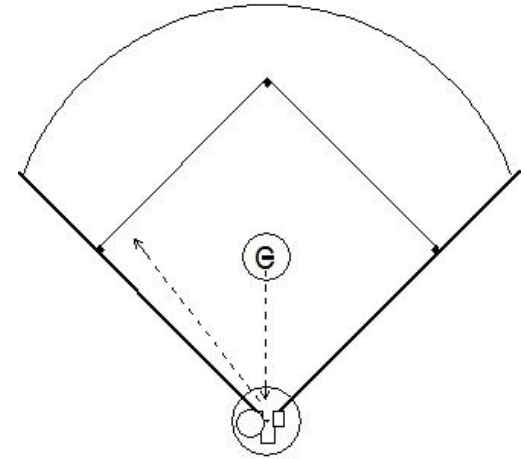
This drill can be done with a tee, or with the coach pitching. The tee will help players with their positioning, and the coach pitch will assist with timing.

Execution:

1. Have each batter, open their shoulders and stance (while staying in the batter's box), and point it toward the third base side of the field (pull for RH batters; opposite field for LH batters).
2. Then have them swing and watch the ball head to left field.
3. Then have the player close his or her stance and aim towards right field. They should practice hitting the ball to this field as well.

Coaching Tips:

- If you use a coach to pitch the ball to the players, have them swing slightly ahead of time to get ahead of the ball and pull it into left field (right field for LH hitters). Conversely, you show them to wait for the ball to hit it later, and it will go to the opposite field.



Players learn to master directional hitting.

DRILL #24 – HIT AND RUN

Skill Level: Advanced

Purpose:

Batters learn to hit to a hole to advance a running teammate.

Setup:

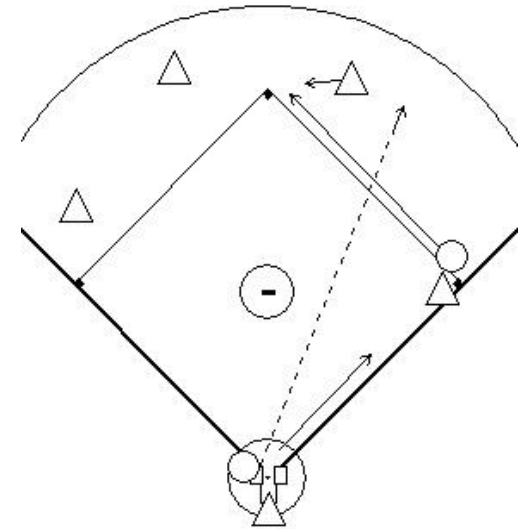
To start, you might want to hit from a tee, just so the hitters can aim their swing where the hole is going to be in the lineup. You will need a runner on first base, and infielders at all of the infield positions.

Execution:

1. Like any hit and run play, the object is to have the ball hit through the hole left when the second baseman goes to cover the appearance of the steal.
2. The runners will be awarded one point if they execute a good hit and run, with both players being safe on their bases.
3. The defense will get three points for a double play, two points for getting the man running to second out, and one point for getting the man going to first out. No points if all runners are safe.

Coaching Tips:

- You can alter this drill a little by putting the hit and run on with a runner at second, or, you can have players at first and third, with the hit and run in the middle. Further, you can add a pitcher to make it more difficult to hit the ball into the hole.
- This is a great combination drill to run in a practice where you are trying to teach read and reaction for your infielders, and also hitting skills for your batters.



Batters learn to hit to a hole and fielders learn to react to a hit and run situation and how to play the best defense against it.

DRILL #25 – RIGHT, MIDDLE, LEFT HITTING

Skill Level: Advanced

Purpose:

This drill will help players learn to hit to any field when they need to. Hitting to opposite fields or other spots are key to good offensive output.

Setup:

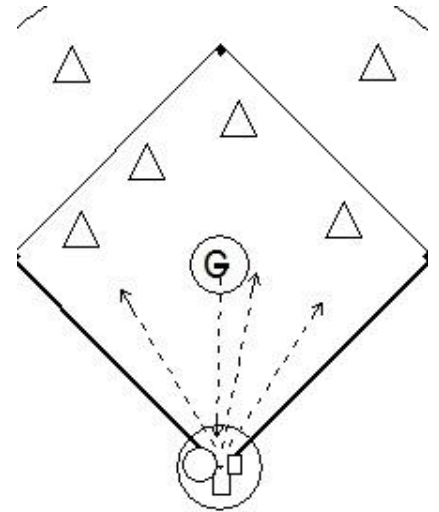
You can have the coach pitch to the players to start, but then you might want to include the pitchers in this drill. You will just have a batter and the pitcher – and you can have fielders if you like, to shag the balls.

Execution:

1. When your batter is hitting the ball, he or she needs to start off by trying to hit a variety of pitches to right field.
2. Once they are able to do that, then they need to try and hit them to center field.
3. Then, of course, the next one is to hit to left field.
4. You can also have your players learn to hit line drives, fly balls and grounders. They can practice certain batting techniques that will allow them to hit the ball where they need to when they need to.

Coaching Tips:

- Watch for proper hitting form with proper balance, even weight distribution, eyes on the ball and more.



Hitters learn to be more varied in their approach so that they can hit the ball where they need to when they need to.

DRILL #26 – SWING DOWN

Skill Level: Advanced

Purpose:

Most coaches will teach their hitters to swing down on the ball. When you watch professionals in the batting circle, they are swinging down towards the ground. This drill helps prevent swinging upward and creating fly balls.

Setup:

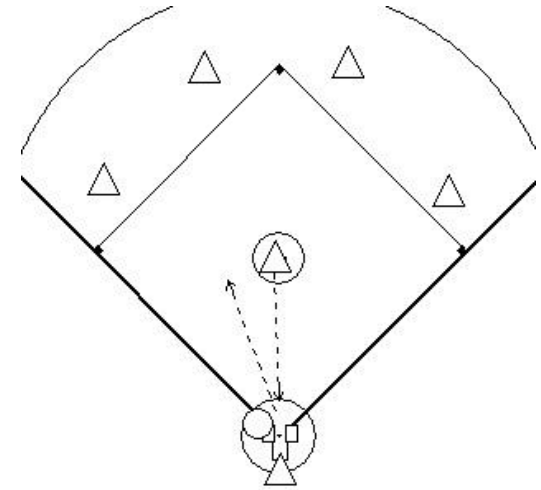
Tee (or pitchers) and a batter with an infield.

Execution:

1. Either with a tee, or with a pitcher, balls are hit downward into the infield.
2. Each time a batter hits a grounder they get a point – up to 10 points. If they hit a line drive they get zero points, if they hit a pop up, they lose all of their points and must start again.

Coaching Tips:

- Watch for good hitting form and that players are keeping their eyes on the ball and then swinging down not level or up.



Players learn to swing down on the ball and reduce their number of pop ups.

PITCHING DRILLS

DRILL #27 – THE BEGINNING PITCHER

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

Players learn and work on the fundamentals of pitching – grip, wind up and delivery.

Setup:

A pitcher's mound, softballs and players that want to pitch.

Execution:

1. Less like a drill and more like basic instruction, you will provide a few basics to help your players get started as pitchers.

Grip –

To begin, you can teach the players the proper softball grip for a basic fastball. Most coaches will start with a four-seam fastball grip. In this grip, the index and middle fingers go across the horseshoe seam, as opposed to the two-seam fastball, where the fingers go with the seam.

The players should have a firm grip, but the ball should not touch the palm (the more friction, the less speed on the ball). This might take time for younger pitchers to get used to.

(Continued)



Four seam softball grip.

DRILL #27 – THE BEGINNING PITCHER CONT.

Windup –

Players need to learn the proper windup technique, as this is where they begin to generate the power behind their pitches. Here are the proper steps:

- Placement of foot in front of rubber (for push off)
- Bringing the ball to rest, the step, the kick, reaching back
- Uncoiling the body

Delivery –

The delivery may seem secondary in the entire equation, but it is crucial for a pitchers success.

The one element that is likely most important is to find a release point for a pitch that allows for more strikes. Hitting this release point is a matter of constant repetition, and takes time. This helps to deliver consistency in the pitches.

The different pitches may have different release points, but, in each pitch type, the release point should be relatively similar. Follow through after the pitch should be encouraged.

Coaching Tips:

- The skills of a pitcher are developed over time, and that time should be taken to make sure the technique is proper.
- You should choose to ease your pitchers into specialty pitches (curve ball, change up), as it can injure a player's arm with too much repetition as a young player.



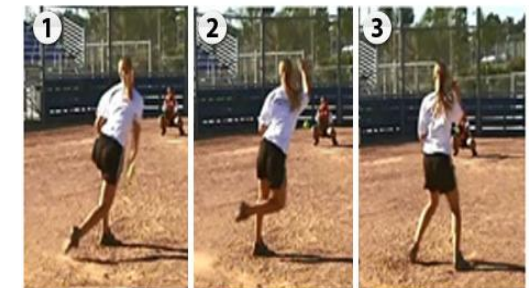
Stance



Backswing



Windup: Arm Circle and Stride in Motion



Delivery: Release and Follow Through

DRILL #28 – PITCHING IN SLOW MOTION

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

Helps pitchers to find a consistent wind up and delivery.

Setup:

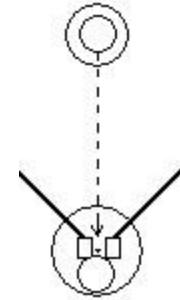
Pitcher, pitching mound, balls and a catcher (which can be the coach).

Execution:

1. Pitcher throws the ball to the catcher using a slow-motion wind up and delivery where each step of the pitching motion is slowed down and exaggerated.

Coaching Tips:

- Having the player pitch in slow motion will create muscle memory and will help their body and mind work together to build a solid, consistent, motion for pitching.



Pitchers learn the intricacies of an effective wind up and delivery by throwing in slow motion.

DRILL #29 – STRIKE ZONE PITCHING

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

Pitcher learns to hit the strike zone with consistency.

Setup:

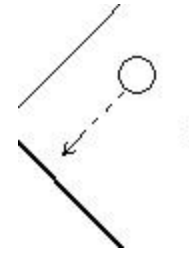
Create an apparatus that simulates the strike zone to an average youth player or outline a strike zone on a wall or fence.

Execution:

1. Player pitches to the strike zone.

Coaching Tips:

- As a player builds control and learns her proper release point, you can decrease the size of the area and have the pitcher target specific spots.



Pitcher throws to a strike zone outlined on the fence.

DRILL #30 – PITCH AND CATCH DRILL

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

Good chemistry between your pitcher and catcher is important. Here they start to develop that chemistry as the pitcher practices throwing to the catcher.

Setup:

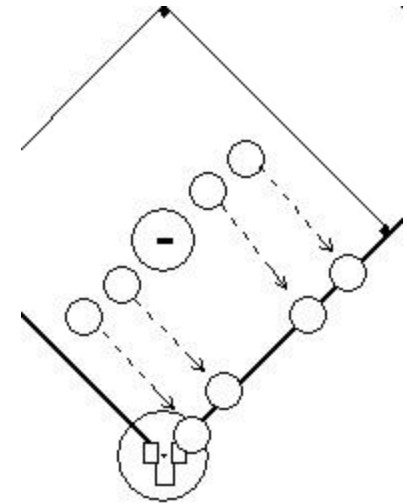
Have your catchers line up along the first base line and your pitchers in the infield facing the catchers.

Execution:

1. Pitchers throw to the catchers using proper windup and delivery.

Coaching Tips:

- Make sure pitchers are using good form and hitting the target with consistency.
- Catchers should practice framing the pitches as if there is an imaginary umpire behind them.



Pitchers throw to catchers.

DRILL #31 – PUSH OFF DRILL

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

Helps pitchers increase the velocity of their pitches.

Setup:

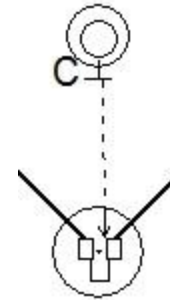
Pitcher stands on the pitching rubber without a glove or ball.

Execution:

1. Pitcher goes into a rocking motion and pushes off so that she's jumping out and her toes are dragging at the same time, in a rock and push motion.
2. The push off cuts down the distance between the pitcher and the catcher and gives her more momentum (i.e. velocity) behind her pitch.

Coaching Tips:

- Make sure when the pitcher lands her toes are at an approximate 45-degree angle.
- Timing is important, she should push off as her arm swings back and up.



Pitchers learn to push off as they throw.

DRILL #32 – TWO-HANDED FIELDING

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

Emphasizes the proper body positioning and footwork a pitcher needs to field the ball and get the out at first base.

Setup:

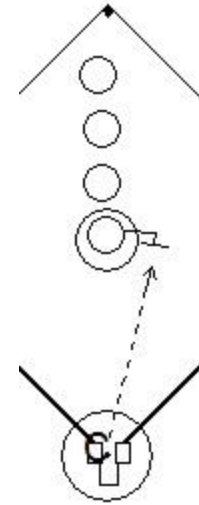
Pitchers should be lined up behind the mound. Coach will be at home plate hitting balls to the pitchers as they step up to the mound.

Execution:

1. The player on the mound simulates a pitch to the coach.
2. The coach hits a ground ball to the player.
3. The player assumes the fielding position by setting her feet and keeping her glove close to the ground.
4. Once the player has made a controlled catch, she steps toward first base and simulates a throw.
5. The player returns to the end of the line.

Coaching Tips:

- The player should charge the ball if it is hit softly.
- The player's feet should always be spread so she is able to move in any direction quickly.
- Make sure players are fielding with two hands.



Pitchers work on fielding ground balls.

DRILL #33 – FIELDING BALLS DOWN THE LINES

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

This drill emphasizes the proper body positioning and footwork a pitcher needs to field a ball hit along the first or third baseline.

Setup:

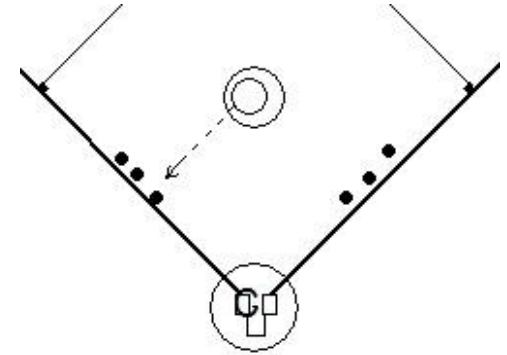
The players should be lined up behind the mound. Set three balls along the first base line and three balls along the third base line close to home. A teammate can be set up at first base to catch the ball.

Execution:

1. The pitcher on the mound simulates a pitch to the coach.
2. The coach calls either “First!” or “Third!”
3. The pitcher runs to the balls placed at that baseline calling, “MINE, MINE, MINE!”
4. The player uses two hands to pick up the ball.
5. The pitcher quickly steps away from the line so she is out of the runner’s path.
6. She takes one preparation step before throwing to first base.

Coaching Tips:

- Pushing the ball into the ground when picking it up is more effective than swiping at it.
- Left-handed players should circle around the ball before squaring up to throw.



A ball hit slowly down the line can often be a tricky play for the defense. Here the pitcher learns how to smoothly field a slow trickler.

DRILL #34 – COMEBACKER TECHNIQUE

Skill Level: Intermediate

Purpose:

This drill works on “comebacks” to the pitcher and the proper footwork needed for turning a double play. This drill also helps a pitcher to determine who is going to cover the bag when turning a double play.

Setup:

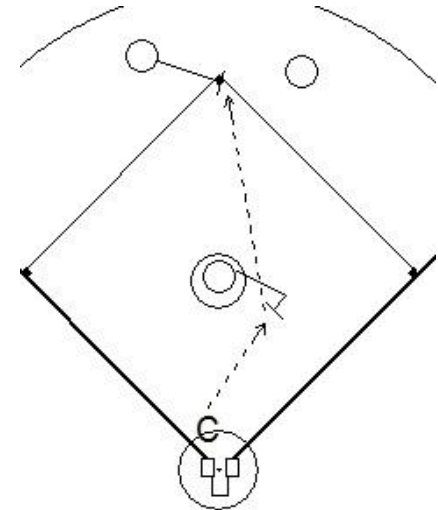
The pitchers should be lined up behind the mound. The coach will be at home plate hitting balls to the players as they step up to the mound. The second baseman and shortstop should be at second base.

Execution:

1. The player on the mound simulates a pitch to the coach.
2. The coach lightly hits a ground ball to the pitcher.
3. The pitcher fields the ball with two hands, turning his body to the side to set up for a quicker throw.
4. The player steps and throws to second base.
5. The second baseman and shortstop cover second depending on where the ball is hit. The shortstop covers if the ball is hit to the right or middle. The second baseman covers on balls hit to the left.

Coaching Tips:

- It is important that the pitcher develops a communication system with his infielders.
- Younger players should field the ball straight on and then turn to throw.



Pitchers and middle infielders work on getting the runner out at second.

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