

# Baseball Skills and Drills

## Warm Up

### *Stretching*

There are a variety of stretching exercises that can be used as a warm up before drills are practiced. Here are a few to help a player warm up...

***Hamstring stretch*** – This can be performed in two different ways. 1) Have players get in a circle shoulder width apart. Players should spread their legs shoulder width and bend down and touch their toes. The player can remain in a touching toe position for 30 seconds. 2) Player can cross his or her right leg over the left leg and bend down and touch their toes. Player should remain down for 30 seconds. After 30 seconds, the player can place their left leg over the right leg and do the same for 30 seconds.

***Arm stretches*** – 1) Players line up at shoulder width. With their arms extended over their heads, players stand on their toes and reach as high as possible. 2) Players raise their arms shoulder height and rotate them in a circular motion. The players can rotate their arms front wards and then backwards.

### *Running*

- 1 ***2 Laps around the diamond***– 1 lap in each direction.
- 2 ***Line Drills*** – Start from the first baseline, and sprint to center field. The players should do three to five sprints before drills.

# hitting Drills

## ***Belt Buckle Batting***

Lining up the player in front of the tee so they are in the proper batting area.

**What you need** – You will need to set up a tee with the ball on it. Batters should have a bat and a helmet on.

**How this drill works** – Setting a young player up in the batting area might be one of the toughest things to get them to do when batting. They don't quite understand the concept of a batter's box, so you need to help them understand how to line up through a different method.

Explain to the player they must keep their belt buckle right across from the ball and show them how far away they should be (around 24 inches). If a young player can understand they need to keep their belt buckle in front of the ball on the tee, then you will have much great success teaching them where to stand in order to hit the ball.

**Result** – Once players have learned the grip on the bat and how to stand, the next thing they need to learn is where to stand in order to ensure the highest success when swinging the bat and making contact.

## ***Invisible Ball***

This drill puts the bat in the hands for a swing without the ball.

**What you need** – Give the player a bat, helmet and then line them up in front of the tee – without the ball.

**How this drill works** – With the player at the tee, the coach helps them get into the proper batter's stance to make good contact with the ball. The tee should be waist high (or slightly under) and the player needs to focus on the 'imaginary ball'.

The coach will back up, and the player will focus on the spot they are supposed to hit on the imaginary ball. While the other players in the station are waiting, they can pretend they are fielding the ball when the coach says **swing**, and the player takes a swing.

**Result** – Batters might swing too high, or swing too low, but this drill will help them focus on the spot they need to swing to make contact.

### ***Coach Says***

This will help the players learn the different steps involved in a good swing.

**What you need** – Line up the kids on both the first and third baselines.

**How this drill works** – This is a batter's version of 'Simon Says' where the players must do what you say in order to demonstrate their understanding of a skill.

You will focus on three key areas: grip, stance and swing. When you say any one of those three words, the player must show you their best grip, stance or swing (after instruction, of course). As the coach, you can watch, and go to individual players to help them with different aspects of their swing.

**Result** – You will be able to help the players with each step of their swing, and sometimes that is more helpful than seeing the entire swing all at once.

### ***Kiss and swing***

This will be a fun drill for the kids as they try to get the bat to kiss the ball

**What you need** – Place a ball upon the tee, and have a batter with a helmet and bat standing in the proper position to hit the ball. You can have two or more stations for this drill with a parent helper or assistant coach at each station.

**How this drill works** – Coaches will help the batter assume the correct stance in the batter's box. The rest of the drill is up to the batter. Sometimes, taking a swing in slow motion so a player can visualize where they want to hit the ball is valuable in building memory.

Before the batter takes a swing, they need to slowly go through the batting motion and stop the bat right where they want to hit the ball. This is the 'kiss' the bat will give the ball. The player then brings the bat back up and then takes a normal swing at the ball.

Focusing on the spot they want to hit (the kiss) is a fun way for kids to learn what motion they need to hit the ball where they want.

**Result** – Your players will begin to develop the muscle memory and coordination to make consistent contact with the ball.

### ***Ready, Set, Swing***

This will help the players learn the different steps involved in a good swing off the tee.

**What you need** -- Place a ball upon the tee, and have a batter with a helmet and bat standing in the proper position to hit the ball. You can have two or more stations for this drill with a parent helper or assistant coach at each station.

**How this drill works** – This is a batter’s version of ‘Simon Says’ where the players must do what you say in order to demonstrate their understanding of a skill.

You will focus on three key areas: grip, stance and swing. When you give the following commands: **Ready, Set, Swing**, the player must show you their best grip, stance or swing (after instruction, of course). As the coach, you can watch, and go to individual players to help them with different aspects of their swing.

**Result** – Your players will begin to develop the muscle memory and coordination to make consistent contact with the ball.

### ***Ready, Set, Swing with the Swift Stick***

This will help the players learn the different steps involved in a good swing off the tee with the use of the swift stick.

**What you need** -- Place a ball upon the tee, and have a batter with a helmet and swift stick standing in the proper position to hit the ball. You can have two or more stations for this drill with a parent helper or assistant coach at each station.

**How this drill works** – This is a batter’s version of ‘Simon Says’ where the players must do what you say in order to demonstrate their understanding of a skill with the use of the swift stick.

You will focus on three key areas: grip, stance and swing. The coach will give the batter the following commands in order: **Ready, Set, Swing**. When you give those three commands, the player must show you their best grip, stance and swing (after instruction, of course). As the coach, you can watch, and go to individual players to help them with different aspects of their swing.

## **Throwing and Fielding Drills**

## ***Show the Ball***

Learning how to properly hold the ball is the first step to throwing it well.

**What you need** – Each player needs to have a ball and a glove in order to work in this drill.

**How this drill works** – Gripping the baseball is essential to throwing properly and accurately. At a young age, learning the proper grip is the best way to help them build the foundation for throwing.

Each player has the ball, and they must grasp the ball with the thumb on the underside, and the two top finger spread slightly apart over the top. The ring finger and the pinky should be touching the side of the ball slightly on the outside.

When the coach says 'show me', each of the players gets into the proper throwing stance: legs apart (one in front of the other), foot on the throwing side is behind the body, and the arm is up, with the elbow raised to shoulder height and the forearm and bicep at a 90 degree angle (L-shape).

**Result** – Coaches will be able to watch how their players are gripping the ball as they show them the grip and the throwing stance. Problems can be corrected at this point.

## ***Slow- Mo Throw***

At an early age, coaches often combat players that cannot throw the ball without throwing it as hard as they can.

**What you need** – Set up a target (or a series of targets for several stations), that is about 10 to 15 feet away. It shouldn't be too far for the kids, otherwise they feel like they have to throw the ball hard. Line up the kids in single file in each station.

**How this drill works** – In order to get the player to throw the ball normally, you need to help them understand that the ball will go as far as they want with a slow motion throw. This drill works as a method to reinforce the basic throwing skills, but also to learn control.

Teach the players to learn control by asking them to throw in slow motion with just enough force to get the ball to the target. Once they can get the ball to the target with the slow motion throw, ask them to do the same thing with their normal throw.

**Result** – Younger players will learn to control their throws. This is important to make sure they have accuracy and that they aren't throwing the ball all over the place.

### ***One Knee Throwing***

This helps players learn the upper body action of throwing, without using their legs. Also builds throwing strength.

**What you need** – Each player needs to have a ball to perform this drill. To start, you may want to give the players a softer ball, like a tennis ball.

**How this drill works** – This drill emphasizes the upper body action: right from the grip, to the raised arm and elbow, the L-shape between the forearm and bicep, and then turning the body and following through towards the intended target.

The player starts with the body facing the target and the ball raised. The player can throw at a target, a fellow player, or a coach. The proper throwing mechanics should be watched for as the player throws the ball toward the target. A good follow through toward the target is important.

**Result** – This drill helps the player learn to upper body action for throwing, along with building throwing strength and accuracy.

### ***Soft fly ball***

Sometimes younger baseball players have a fear of catching the ball because they are afraid it is too hard.

**What you need** – You will need enough softer balls (tennis balls, wiffle balls, puffy balls) for all of the players. The player should have their gloves.

**How this drill works** – It is tough for some young players to get over the fact that the ball is very hard and they may get hit. This prevents some players from making the effort to catch the ball. They are afraid that if they miss, the ball is going to hit, and therefore hurt them.

Start off by showing the players that the ball is very soft, and even if it hits them in the head, they are not going to get hurt. Then, you can start off with the players in the lines and throw the ball to them one by one. Once the players get the hang of it, they can start throwing the ball to each other to try and catch it.

**Result** – Younger players will get over the fear of catching the ball by working with the soft ball and eventually moving up to the harder ball.

### ***Block the Ball***

This is the first step to getting kids to learn the prospect of fielding the ball.

**What you need** – Set up two or three lines of players so the kids can get maximum repetition. Have a coach or parent volunteer at each line with several balls.

**How this drill works** – With this drill coaches need to first instruct their players on how to move to get in front of the ball. Start the players off in the ready position (hands on the knees, slightly bent, and with their head up watching the play).

The coaches or volunteers should roll the ball directly at the players at first, but then to either side. The player needs to shuffle to get their body in front of the ball to knock it down. For each ball that the player knocks down they get three points. If the player scoops the ball with their glove, they get five points.

The players will get excited about getting points for knocking the ball down.

**Result** – Learning to knock the ball down and ultimately to try and scoop the ball is the first part of fielding the ball.

### ***One and Two***

Award points to the players for throwing and catching the ball at shoulder level or above.

**What you need** – Pair up the players and give them each a ball. (You can get a softer ball to start).

**How this drill works** – This drill helps players to understand the importance of accurate throws and catches that are at the shoulder level. It makes it easier for kids to throw and catch if they have something to aim for. It makes it especially better if it becomes a game and there are points at stake.

If the pair throws and catches at shoulder height, then they get two points. If they throw the ball and then catch it at waist level, then they get one point. If it is lower than the waist they get no points.

This will help the players learn to keep the ball up where their teammates can catch it much easier.

**Result** – More accurate throws and players can compete against each other in a game-like setting.

### ***Fast Fingers Drill***

Charging the ball to get to it quickly is a great skill to learn in baseball.

**What you need** – Line the players up in four single file lines along the first or third baseline. The coach will stand out in front of them about 15 or 20 feet away.

**How this drill works** – All of the players will be in their lines and the coach will be in front of them. The coach will point to one of the lines and then roll or hit the ball to them with a slow grounder.

The player needs to run up to pick up the ball and then settle themselves down to throw back to the coach. The object for the kids is going to be to pick up the ball, remember their proper throwing action and make a nice throw back to the coach.

Once the coach tosses the ball, he or she counts out 1001, 1002, 1003... and then stops when the ball gets back to the coach. The object of the game is to have the players get the ball back to the coach as quickly and accurately as possible. The quickest pick up and throw is the fastest fingers player.

**Result** – The players will learn to get the ball to the coach quicker by charging it, picking it up, and then making a good throw.

## **Base Running Drills**

**Coach run around (then players)**

This is a base identification drill, and the coach gets a little exercise

**What you need** – Make sure all of the bases are intact and in their proper positions. The kids can watch from the middle of the diamond.

**How this drill works** – At first, get all of the kids attention and go over which bases are which on the field. Then, the coach will stand at home plate in front of the tee and take an imaginary swing at an imaginary ball and then go towards first base. Tell them to yell out which base you are heading to each time.

Once you get to first base, they yell 'first'. Once you round the bag and get to second, they yell 'second'. Etcetera.

After you do this a couple of times, then you can run each player through the bases and have them yell out which base they are on, along with all of the other kids.

**Result** – Base identification is important to learn at an early age. It is the fundamental for base running and should be something you work on regularly.

### **Base Runners**

Players need to learn to listen to what their coaches say when they are running the bases.

**What you need** – You can have the tee set up, with a batter at the tee, but without a bat. The coach will be at first base.

**How this drill works** – The player will take an imaginary swing with the imaginary bat and then run as fast as they can to first base. As the runner approaches the base he or she will call out to the runner to either stay at the base, or to keep running.

Run each player through the drill differing each time what you are going to say to the player. They will begin to learn through the repetition to listen for their coach's voice when they are running the bases.

**Result** – Knowing the coach is going to help them will give some players confidence on the base pads. For others it is a lesson in listening to what the coach says on the field.

### **High Five**

Players need to learn to drop the bat properly and focus on running straight through the base.

**What you need** – You can have the tee set up, with a batter at the tee ready to

swing a bat. One coach will position himself at the plate and the other coach will be at first base with hand raised in a position to give a high five to the player..

**How this drill works** – On the coach's command, the player will take a swing with the bat and then run as fast as they can to first base. As the runner approaches first base he or she will give a high five to the coach who is stationed at the base. You do not have to put a ball on the tee unless you wish to have fielders.

The coach at home plate is responsible for making sure that the batter takes a good swing and dropping the bat down properly without throwing it. The coach at first base is responsible for making sure that the player runs straight through the base.

**Result** –Players will learn to swing and drop the bat down properly. They will also learn to run straight to the base without looking where the ball is hit.

### **Next base drill**

Once a player is on first base, they may not always know where they need to go next.

**What you need** – You can set up a couple of stations if you have enough bases. Set up a diamond with the bases as they would normally be set up. Start with a player on first base and a line-up of batters.

**How this drill works** – This drill starts with a player on first base and one at the tee to bat. Instead of having a real ball, players will 'show' coach their great swing and then run to first.

You will also have to explain to the kids on first base, where they need to go next. Another coach or a parent volunteer can be on second to help direct the players where to go next. Keep going so each player has a chance to bat and run around the bases.

Coaches should watch that the runner understands which base he or she is headed to, and also that they stop right on the base.

**Result** – This is a basic base running drill that helps kids learn where to go during the game.

### **Catch the players**

Speedy base running is the key to this fun drill for the kids and lots of work for the coaches!

**What you need** – You can either set up a couple of stations with four bases, or

have coaches and parent volunteers alternate. Groups of four runners at a time will go.

**How this drill works** – The coach will start the four runners, one at a time. Give each runner a five second head start and then send the next runner. After all four runners, then the coach heads around the base pads.

The object is for each player to catch the players ahead of them while they are running around the bases. Once it gets to the coach, then the coach needs to run fast to catch the players that are left. If any of the players run off the baseline, or if they go to the wrong base, they will be out of the game.

**Result** – This will probably be one of the most fun games you and the kids are playing. It teaches them they need to run around the bases as fast as they can, or coach will catch them. It translates well to a game situation.

### **Hook Pattern**

This drill is designed to teach a batter to run a hook pattern when the ball is hit to the outfield.

**What you need** – You will need 4 cones placed about 4 to 6 feet into foul territory along the first base line. Make the arc about halfway or more to first base. The arc will help set the runner on a more direct course to second base.

**How this drill works** – The player will take an imaginary swing with the imaginary bat and then follow the path of the cones to first base. As the runner approaches the base he or she plants her left foot on the inside corner of the bag and leans into the turn towards second base.

Coaches should watch that the runner cut the inside part of the base properly. While it is preferable to use the left foot to touch the base, the right foot can be used as well as long as the runner does not get jumbled up.

**Result** – The player will become more aware of where the ball is hit and begin to make decisions on whether to advance to the next base.