

SOFTBALL DRILLS AND PRACTICE PLANS

by Coach Becky Wittenburg



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Introduction

Softball coaches are constantly on the lookout for drills and skills that are going to make their players better. Further, being able to put those drills together with a practice plan to reinforce those skills makes it all the more effective. That's going to be the goal of this guide.

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.

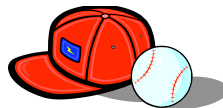
Practicing the drills included in this book are going to help your players continue to develop their playing habits and improve their overall skill level. We have divided this book into three different skill areas that you can focus on:

- Hitting
- Fielding
- Base running

The drills included in this book will range in skill / age level based on their difficulty. Some of the more advanced drills you certainly aren't going to use for a T-ball team. Likewise, the more basic skills, like throwing the ball to a base, aren't going to be reinforced if you are at a teenage level of softball.

Each drill's skill level will be denoted by the following symbols:

Beginner (T-ball, minor little league):



Intermediate (Youth ball; age 8 to 12)



Advanced (13 and up)



Planning practices

After you have a few more drills under your belt, it is important to structure those drills into an effective practice. We will also include 25 different practice plans to use throughout a season. Each of these practice plans will be geared towards a specific skill or set of skills and each will continue to build off one another.

You don't have to use all of the practice plans! We have included several different ones so you can choose the ones that work best for you and your team. As a coach, you will probably only choose the ones where your team needs the most attention. With our practice plans, you can simply print the ones you want off your computer and you will be ready to go!

Ready to go!

The first section of this book will be the various drills, divided into three separate sections. Then you will notice those drills included in the practice plans we have provided for you in the second half of the book.

Once you have gone through this book, you will be armed with a number of great drills and an idea of how to implement them for your team! Then, you watch as their skills get better and you become more confident as a coach!

Best of luck!

1.0 Fielding drills

The following drills will address fielding and a few of the fielding tactics that you might want to teach your players. **Remember, watch for the skill level each of these drills should be used for!**

Note: In some cases, diagrams will be used to help illustrate the drill.

1.1 Scoop Drill



This is a great drill to help younger players learn which way to use their glove.

What you need: Plastic milk jugs with the bottoms cut out. One half also needs to be cut out. It should resemble the set up of a softball glove, with one side cut out, so it looks like a scoop.

How this drill works: Since a scoop is something that is carried outside the hand, younger players will be able to maneuver the scoop easier than having a glove on their hand. With the scoop shaped similar to a glove, they will begin to understand glove positioning.

When you are instructing the players on how to use their 'scoop', show them where the scoop goes in certain situations. Show them grounders, waist level tosses, and shoulder / head level tosses.

Results: What you want to show the players is how their glove is just like the scoop. When the have the web side down for grounders the ball rolls into the glove, etc.

1.2 Past Ball



One of the first things you should do to teach younger players how to field properly is to get them in front of the ball.

What you need: Gloves and balls. Two pylons about 10' apart.

How this drill works: Explain to the players that they cannot let the ball get past them and cross the imaginary line between the two pylons. You (coach) will roll, or bounce the ball towards the player in an attempt to get the ball past them. Instruct them on how to shuffle from side to side with their glove in front of them to get their entire body in front of the ball.

You will probably have a few players who don't want to get in front of the ball because they fear it will hurt them. This is completely normal for players at a younger age. If you want, try the drill with soft softballs (for T-ball level) or with tennis balls – just to get the players used to getting hit.



Diagrams created using Softball Blueprint Software. To learn more, visit:

www.SoftballBlueprint.com

Results: Players need to learn at an early age how to shuffle their feet to get in position for the ball. This drill, keeping them between the pylons will help them gain range in their shuffle and help them learn to keep the ball in front of them.

1.3 Alligator Arms

Using two hands to catch the ball is important for younger players to learn. If you use something like Alligator arms (kids like alligators), it will give them a better understanding of what is expected of them when they field a ball.

What you need: Gloves and balls

How this drill works: Prior to the drill starting, explain to the young ball players the idea of how an alligator jaw works. Then show them how catching the ball and fielding grounders works the same way. The ball is just like an alligator's food, and they need to capture it with both hands. Have the players stand in a single file line in the fielding ready position. When you roll the ball, have them place

their glove down in front of the ball, and explain to them that when the ball reaches their glove, the other hand should clamp down to secure the ball – just like alligator jaws – but only with their arms. You can do this with waist high throws and shoulder height throws as well.

Results: With this drill, the younger players will soon learn the importance of ‘feeding the alligator,’ so to speak. They will soon learn the concept of securing the ball in their glove with two hands. This is especially helpful for younger players learning to field grounders properly.

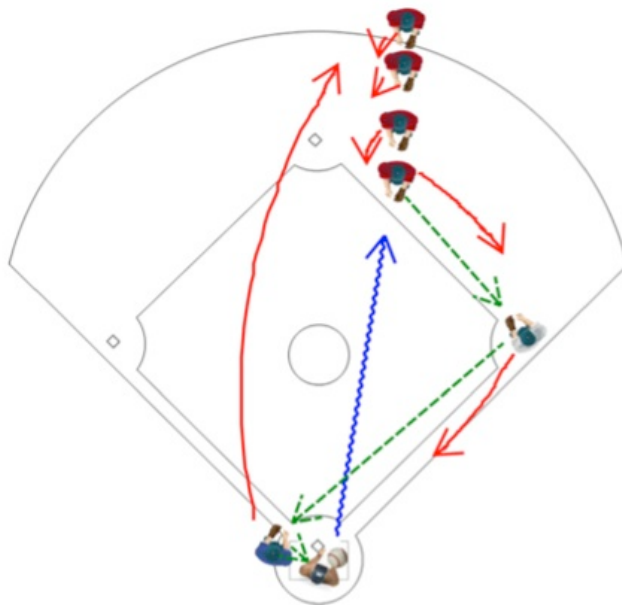
1.4 Ball to First



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.

What you need (set up) 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.

How this drill works: You can either toss or lightly hit the ball to the players in line at second base. Explain to them that when they get the ball, one of the first places they are going to throw is first base. So, they practice their fielding skills, and then add one more step to it by throwing it to first base. Then the first baseman can throw it home.



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.

Note: 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.

Results: One of the toughest things to teach young players is to field the ball, and **then** throw it to the appropriate base. Repetition is extremely important in this drill for them to associate fielding the ball with throwing it to first base (or other bases). This drill also helps them learn the bases and positions in the infield.

1.5 Step Away Toss

Learning to throw and catch are two of the most basic elements of softball. With this drill, you can do both, and help the arms of the players condition themselves to throw longer and shorter distances. One of the frustrating parts of coaching young players is they don't have a sense of throwing softly and throwing harder (for long distance).

What you need (set up) : Balls, gloves and an even number of players. You will set the players up facing each other about one stride apart to begin.

How this drill works: In order to help players learn to throw and catch the ball, and that the amount of force they put behind the ball, they need to throw from different distances. Further, it is good for players to get used to the ball coming at them from differing distances, as well.

With the players facing each other about 3' apart, they should be instructed to place the ball in the other player opposite's glove to start. The catching player needs to use the 'alligator arms' approach to collecting the ball in their glove. Once both players successfully execute this part, they take one giant step back from one another.

Results: Each time the players take a step back, they must learn to adjust their throwing and catching.

1.6 Lead Runner

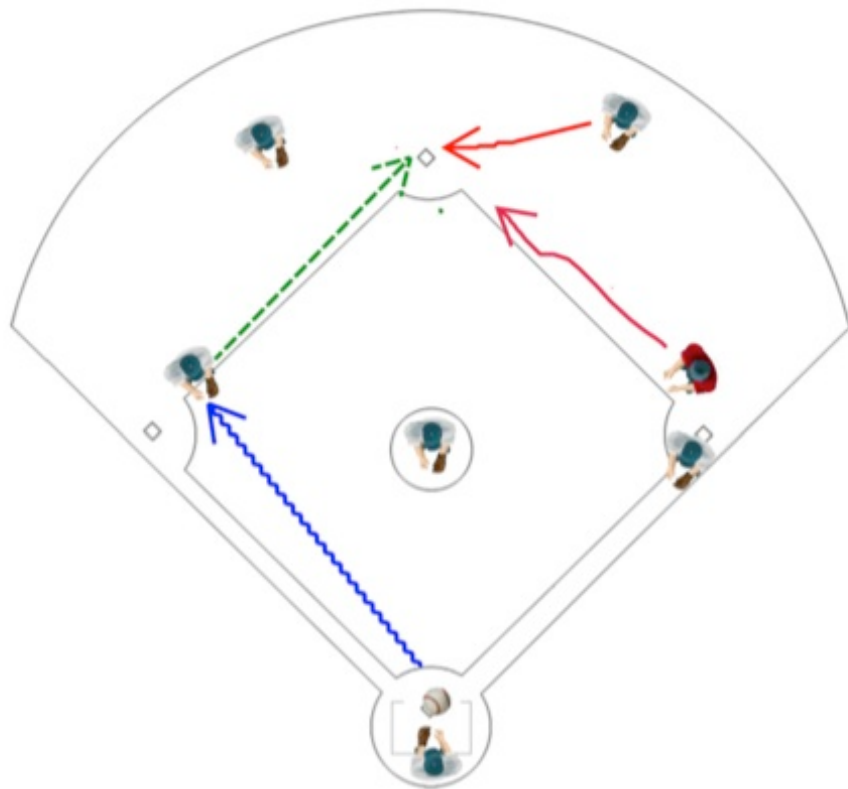
After players master the throw to first, they need to learn how to throw out the lead runner. This drill will help them see the lead runner, and also be able to make a decision on throwing to first base, or to second.

What you need (set up): Set up a regular infield with all positions on the field. Have a runner on first base.

How the drills works: This one is pretty straightforward. With the runner of first base, you can hit to all of the positions and have them throw the ball to where the lead runner is headed (second base). Go through all of the position and force them to not only field the ball, but to make the decision to throw it to second base rather than immediately to first.

Note: To make this drill even more interesting, you can either put a player on first and second, or just on second. The first option makes the player throw it to either first, second or third, depending on the lead runner, and if they can make the throw on time. The second option can be done with the player on second base making a decision to run or not to run, making the fielding player decide to play the runner on second, or make the throw to first.

Another great way to add a little extra to this drill is to allow lead offs for the base runners.



Result: After continuing with this drill over several practices, your players will learn to make the play and react to the different running situations they are going to be faced with during a game. By having the repetition, the players will learn to instinctively make the right play over time.

1.7 Hit the Relay

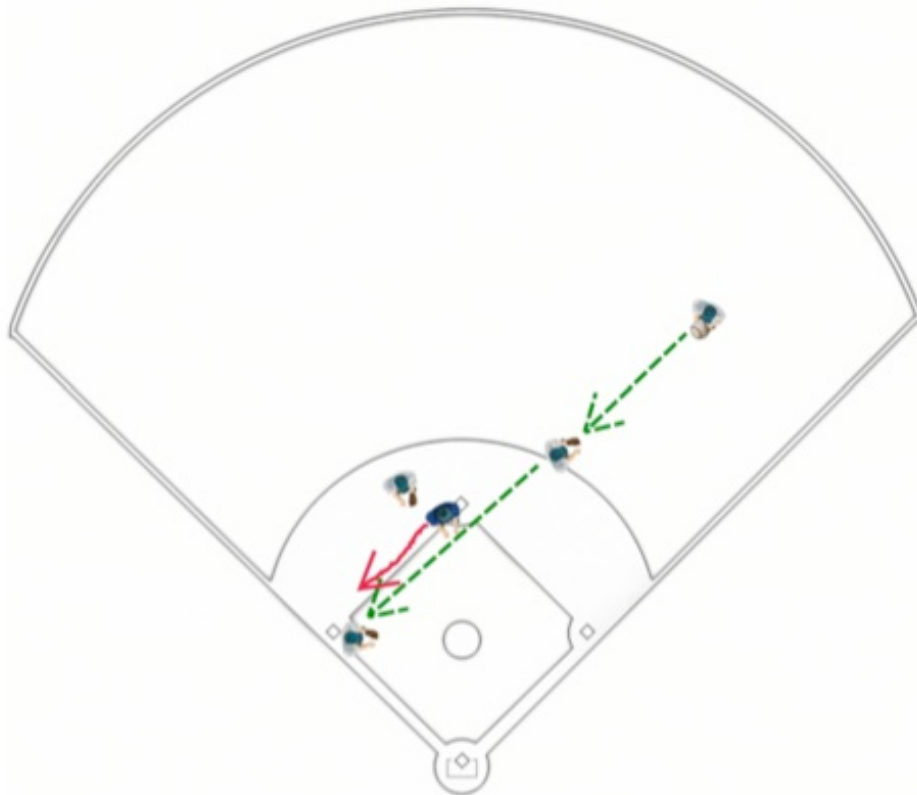


One of the most common plays that lead to errors in minor league softball is hitting the cut off man when a ball is hit to the opposite field and a player is tagging up on either second or third base.

What you need (set up): You should have a second baseman, shortstop and a third baseman in the infield, along with a right fielder. A base runner will occupy second base during this drill.

How the drill works: At first, the coach can simply give the ball to the right fielder and then signal for the play to begin. This takes the element of trying to focus on catching the ball out of the equation until the player understands the concept of hitting the cut off man.

The right fielder should be playing the ball to the cut off man (second baseman) and then the second baseman to the third baseman to try to get the tag out.



This drill can also be run with a left fielder and a base runner on third base. Then the drill would be from the left field to the shortstop and then to home plate. Further, you can add the extra element of catching the ball once the players understand the importance of hitting the cut off man.

1.8 Tag Out

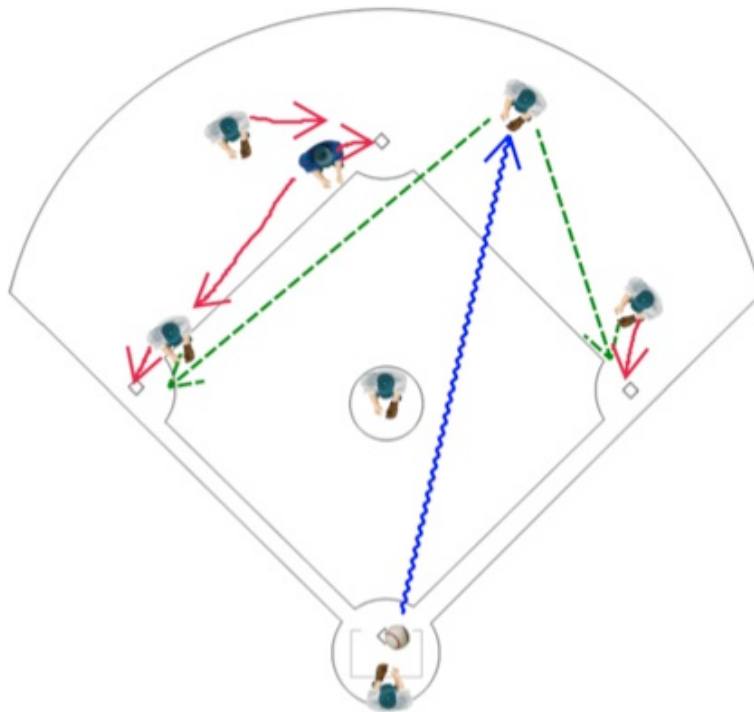


Players at this age often understand how to get players out at first base and they may have also learned the basics of a force out play. But, they must also learn about tagging players out at bases. Before this drill, you need to teach players the difference between a force out and a tag out.

What you need (set up): You will need players to fill the infield. Put a runner on second base to start.

How the drill works: You will 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.

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.



Results: The results of this drill is that your players will have a better understanding of when they should be tagging out a runner, and when it might be a force play. This is an important element of the game. The younger you can teach it to a player, the better off they will be in softball.

1.9 Know Where To Go



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.

What you need (set up): 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.

How this drill works: 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? First base runs after the ball, then second base (or pitch) covers first, short covers second, etc.

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.

Note: 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 ground ball through the infield. This will help both sides.

Results: The results should be fairly simple. The players will learn where they need to be during a play. They will learn to understand that even though they aren't a part of the play, they could be. One mistake can make things go crazy on the field and if players aren't backing each other up, or in position, it will affect their success.



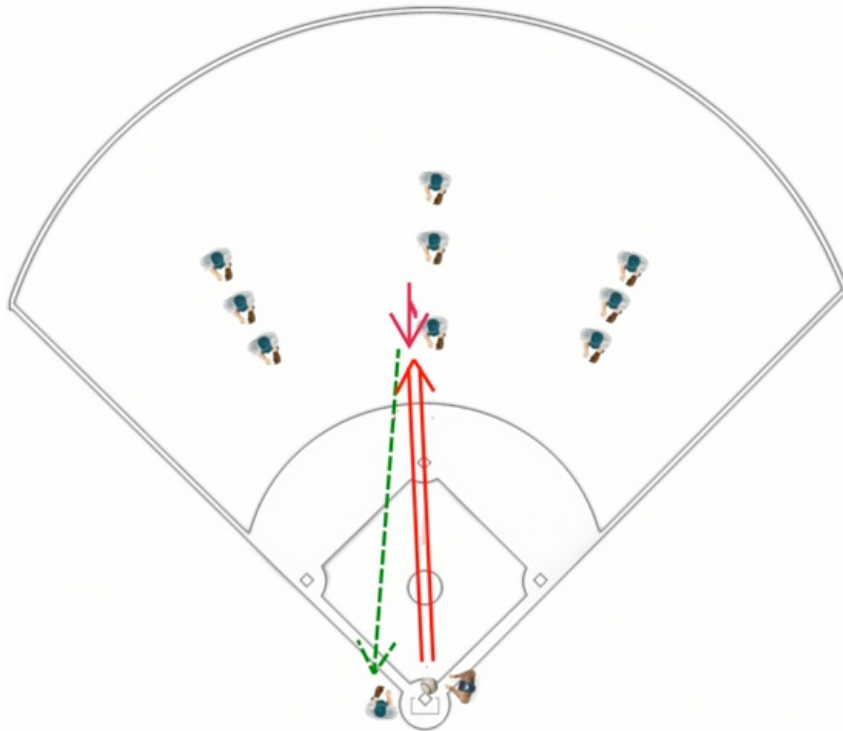
1.10 Catch and Throw

It is good to show outfielders at an early age the appropriate way to approach a fly ball – especially if there is a threatening runner on base.

What you need (set up): 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.

How this drill works: At first, you might want to start with the lines close, and just hit soft, low flies so the players can work on the footwork. 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.

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.



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, or use the relay drill earlier in this section, combined with this drill to work on both areas.



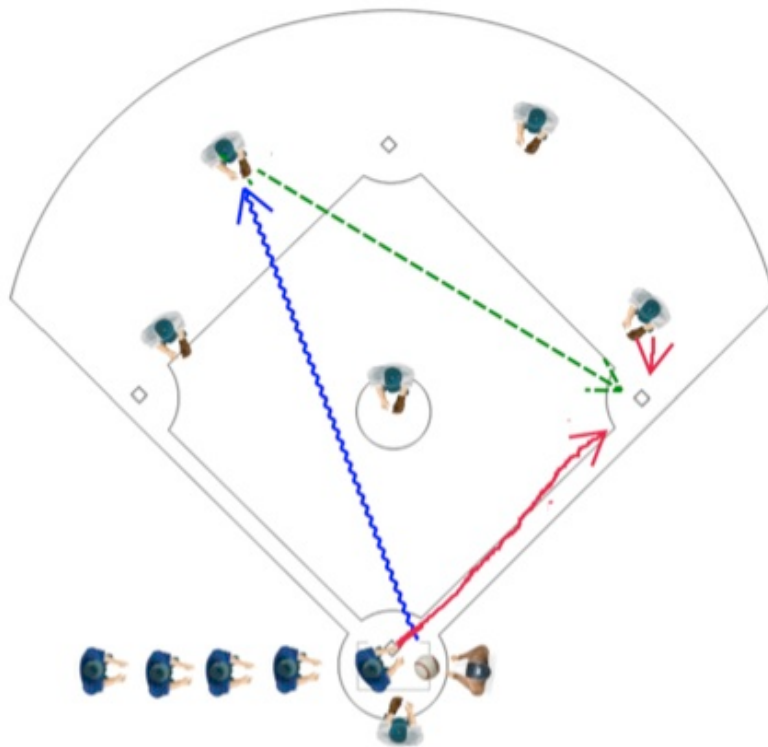
1.11 Throw them out

This combines several of the concepts we have learned in some of the other earlier drills. Fielding the ball and making a throw while there is a runner running to different bases is a skill that needs to be repeated over and over in order for the skill to improve and become second nature

What you need (set up): 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.

How this drill works: 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 to first base.

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.



Results: By adding the runners and testing the composure of the players, they will quickly learn to make the right play, and make it well. One of the most common reasons for losses in Little League

softball are errors. While errors are a part of softball limiting them is one of the keys to victory. Repetition of basic plays will help eliminate the errors made by your ball team.



1.12 Double Play ball

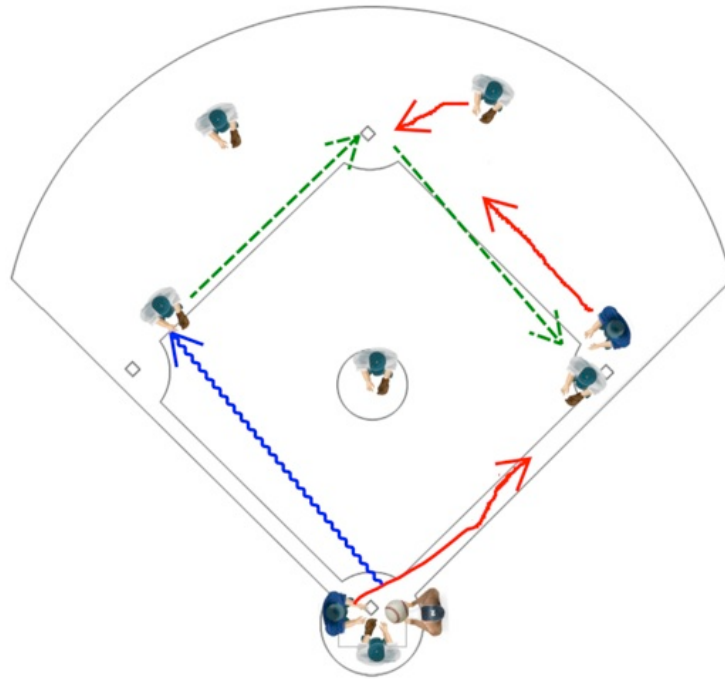
The double play is one of the most exciting and effective plays in softball. It gets a team out of a jam when they need it the most, but it takes excellent timing and a lot of practice in order to execute it effectively.

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

How this drill works: 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.

This is the basic set up of a double play drill. However, 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.



Results: Once players realize that a double play is just a series of single outs, it won't be as difficult to convince them they can do it. if you go through the motions and they understand what takes place during the double play, you will see a lot more of them turned in your games.



1.13 Pickle

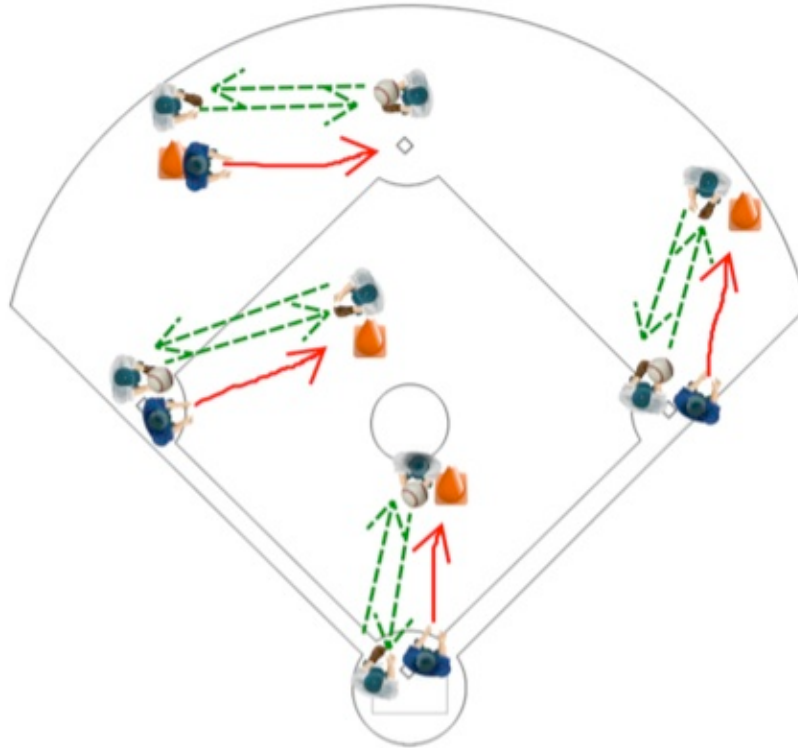
A common situation in softball is the run down. A player caught in between two bases – either one of them being safe. Executing a proper defensive set up is important to getting the out.

What you need (set up): Set up a number of stations that is divisible by three. You will need three people per station (2 fielders, 1 runner). The base set up is below:

All distance between bases is 30 feet (in all directions)

How this drill works: The fielders need to work the ball back and forth in an attempt to get the runner out. The runner needs to try to advance to third base or get back safely to second. You can award the fielders two points if they get the runner out. One point if they get the runner back to

second, zero points if the runner gets to third base. Play the game until the fielders get 5 points. Rotate the players at this point.



Diagrams created using Softball Blueprint Software. To learn more, visit:

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Result: Both the runners and the fielders will understand what they need to do when they are in this situation – both on offense and defense. Rundowns occur often in Little League ball, and even in higher league with regularity. It is good for young players to know how to get the out.

Note: Once the players have mastered this aspect of the drill, then you should advance it to the standard tactic where players are backing each other up and rotating as the rundown advances.



1.14 Pepper (for fielding)

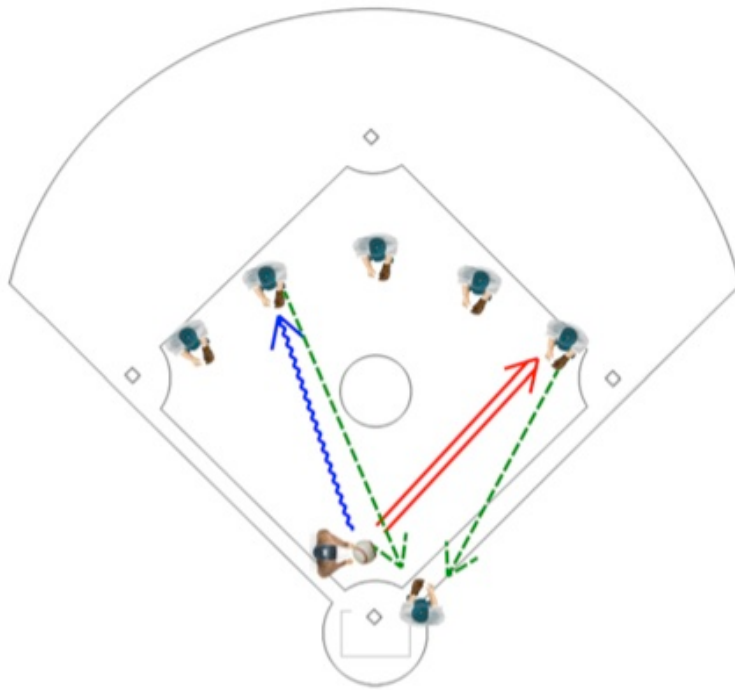
This is a great drill to build hand-eye coordination, quick reaction and to teach older players the value of knocking the ball down at all costs.

What you need (set up): 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.

How this drill works: The coach will be about 15 feet away from the player and will begin by hit grounders and line drives to the players. 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. The coach will hit the ball as quickly as he or she can to the different players. Players are eliminated from pepper for missing balls or making errant throws.

The players must also 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.



Results: Your players will improve their coordination, reaction to the ball and working under pressure to make a good play. Not to mention the improvement on the reaction time to get to the ball. This is a good drill to round out the fielding skills of your players.



1.15 Catch the Flies

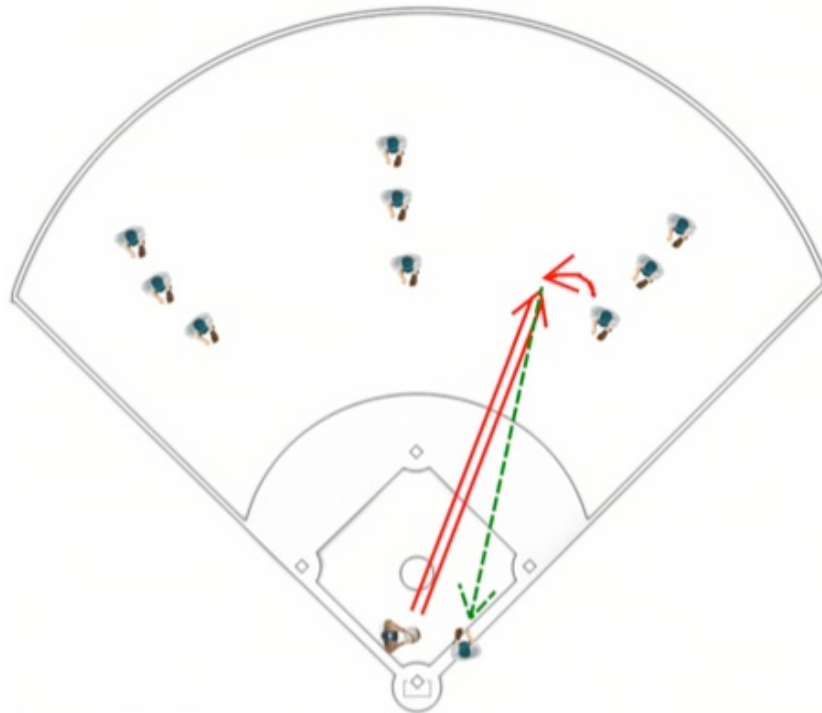
Having the proper footwork and range to catch fly balls that are not hit directly at the player is important.

What you need (set up): Line up the fielders in all three of the fields. Coach will hit the balls to the players.

How this drill works: 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.

Dropped balls are usually caused by improper approach to the ball and then a lack of concentration. This drill emphasizes those areas and helps a player to 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 and is important in gaining an understanding of how the ball is going to travel.



Results: Players will be more responsive and more confident when they are able to accurately and effectively track down a fly ball. This drill also helps prepare them for catching the ball under control and then making the throw.



1.16 Make the play

Softball has so many different defensive combinations, and it is important for players to understand their responsibilities and to make the play when they are called upon.

What you need (set up): 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.

How this drill works: 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.

The good thing about this drill is that the players don't know what the drill is going to be. They need to read and react to the play that is going on.

Results: Once your players go through all of the different situations, they will become more prepared to deal with those situations when they happen during a game.

Other Basic Drills (By Skill Group)



- Basic throwing drill (mechanics)
- Basic catching drill
- Freeze tag out (game to help players understand tagging players out)
- Ready position (show them the ready position for fielding)



- Throwing from one knee (arm strength)
- Throwing to targets (throw accuracy)
- Double play balls (situational)
- Catcher throwing runners out (situational)
- Pitcher and picking off the runner (situational)
- Fielding range (teaches players the proper footwork to get into position for grounders)
- Two hands on the ball (rewards players that catch with two hands)



- Any of the above drills to warm up
- Bunt coverage (situational)
- First base cover (situational)
- Calling the ball (communication)
- Fielding grounders on the run (charging them)

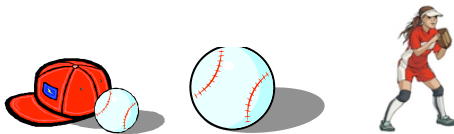
There are hundreds of other fielding drills that you can use, and we will provide you resources to get specific drills for catchers, pitchers, infielders and outfielders.

2.0 Hitting Drills

The following drills are to help hitters make consistent contact and to hit the ball correctly. Once again watch for the different skill levels, however, many of the basic drills can still be used for more experienced players who are struggling with the basics of hitting.

Note: Any time players are doing hitting drills the appropriate safety equipment (helmets) should be worn at all times!

2.1 From The Tee



Even professionals will go back to the basics of using a tee. It helps batters focus on their target area to hit a softball. Encourage your players to use a tee to work on the fundamentals of hitting.

What you need (set up): You need a batter, a tee and several balls.

How this drill works: If you have a batting cage this is great, but against the backstop also works just fine. Raise or lower the tee to reflect the different heights in the strike zone. This drill isn't intended for a player to smash the ball against the fence, but to iron out kinks in the swing.

Focus on hitting on top of the ball, striding towards the field (not the ball), swinging down on the ball and making solid contact with the ball.

Results: If a player is not so focused on hitting it out of the park and strives toward making solid contact with an easy swing and focusing more on the fundamentals of hitting, their improvement will be marked.

The ultimate result is to get players to stop swinging for the fences all of the time and to learn the basic of hitting. Once a player can learn to make regular and solid contact at an early age, you as the coach can impart to them that they will gain power as they grow older and gain strength. Contact is more important at this stage in their softball development.

2.2 Eye on the Spot



Teaching young players the need to keep their eye on the ball might not always be as effective as we as coaches would like. This drill focuses things on a much smaller area of the ball.

What you need (set up): Set up a tee that is about waist height for the player. Put a dime size dot on the backside of the ball, just above the halfway circumference of the ball. Always place the ball with the spot facing toward the backstop.

How this drill works: Often times younger players don't grasp the entire concept of keeping their 'eye on the ball.' Therefore, this drill has been designed to get them to keep their eye on a certain spot on the ball. Once they focus on a target smaller than the ball itself, they can swing at the spot using the fundamentals they have been taught to this point.

Results: Children see the ball as a target that needs to be hit. When they aim for a bigger target, they have a larger room for error. When they focus on a smaller target, they naturally assume a smaller margin for error. This helps them build confidence in hitting the ball, and also develops muscle memory when they are swinging.



Do you have a hitter who is AFRAID of the ball? Learn a quick and easy way to help your athletes overcome this common fear. Visit the below website for an online coaching video (you must be connected to the internet to watch):

<http://www.coachkennybuford.com/ar/hittingmistake5.html>

2.3 Grounder, Pop Up, Line Drive



Knowing how to hit each of these balls is going to give the younger players an idea of why they are supposed to swing the bat the way they are instructed.

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

How this drill works: You can demonstrate to the younger players what happens when you hit certain areas of the ball. Also you can show the players what happens when you swing a certain way (up, down, level).

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.

Results: Once the younger players understand what happens when they strike the ball in certain areas, it will be easier to impart on them that you want them to strike the ball in a downward fashion in order to create more grounders.

Many of them 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.

2.4 Batter stance



Although this drill can be used in different ways at different levels, it still underlines the fundamental need to make sure that a player's stance is adequate. This drill is intended for the younger players, players at all levels can use proper stance training.

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

How this drill works: 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. The coach(es) will then go through the line of players and make any adjustments the first few times. 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.

Results: The repetition alone will be good for the younger players. The stance is one of the most important elements of setting up a good swing. By learning the right stance, it sets up a great foundation for solid batting in the future.



2.5 Balloon Drill

This drill will help to teach the players the right stride length to take when they are hitting. Don't drop the balloon.

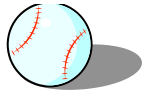
What you need (set up): Line up 6 batters with nearly filled balloons. Don't fill the balloons up too much, as they will pop too easily. All batters should have bats and helmets to start.

How this drill works: As you can imagine from the beginning segment of this drill, that the balloon cannot touch the ground. The ball should be placed between the thighs of the batter and then they should assume their batting stance. When a batter strides forward on their swing, they need to keep the balloon from falling to the ground.

Results: This drill helps players learn to not overstep when they are going to strike the ball. If the balloon drops, the player needs to recognize that they have taken too large a stride and that they need shorten it up.

Balance is extremely important in making solid contact with the ball and will help a player develop hitting consistency. Striding too far throws that balance off-kilter and doesn't allow for power hitting.

2.6 Bunt Drill



The bunt is one of softball's lost arts, but it can come in very handy. It is a good skill for your players to learn and this drill will help.

What you need (set up): The coach will pitch to the players for this drill. The batter will stay at home plate with a bat and helmet.

How this drill works: The coach will set up different point areas near the first and third baselines. This will be according to the optimum areas for a bunt to be placed. For example: 5pts for within 12 inches, 3 pts within 24 inches and 1 pt within 36 inches of either baseline. Also the ball will have to reach halfway down the baseline in order to collect points. If it is too far, the third baseman has an easy out; likewise if it is too short, the catcher will be able to make the play.

Results: As a coach, you will be able to find yourself a good bunter for those tight game situations. Also, you will teach each player an important skill in softball.



2.7 Opposite field / pull hitting

Teaching players how body position and timing can affect the direction their ball will travel, will help them become better all-around hitters in the future.

What you need (set up): 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.

How this drill works: By showing players how their body position and timing can affect the direction the ball will travel, players can develop the skill of hitting the ball to different places on the field.

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). Then have them swing and watch the ball head to left field.

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.

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.

Results: Once a player realizes their body position and the timing of their swing has a dramatic impact on the direction of their ball. It can help their hitting once it develops further, as they will have greater control over where they want to hit the ball.



2.8 Hit and Run

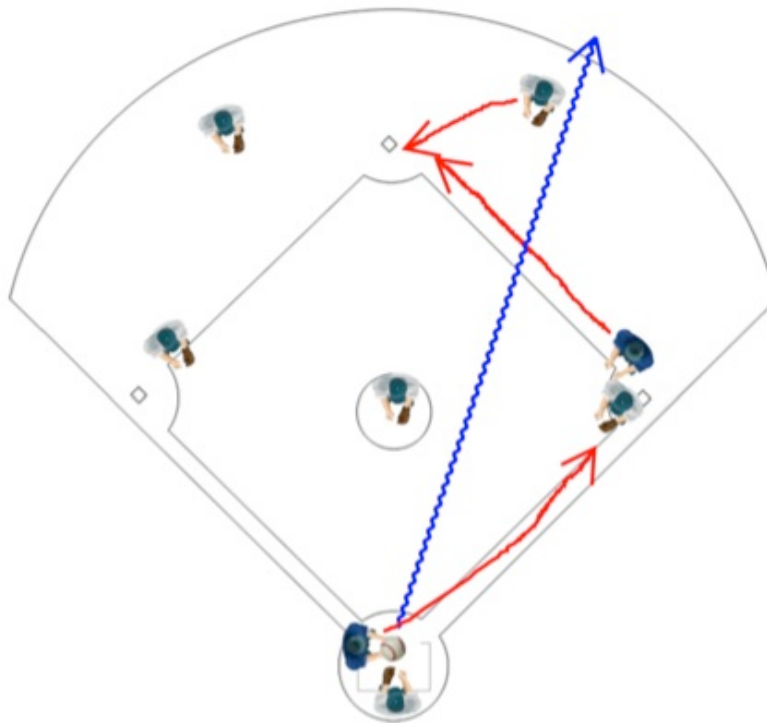
The hit and run is an excellent play to teach at this age, because it builds on some of the skills that have been learned in prior years.

What you need (set up): 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.

How this drill works: 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. The runners will be awarded one point if they execute a good hit and run, with both players being safe on their bases. 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.

You can alter this drill a little by putting the hit and run on with a runner at second, or, you can have player 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 next step for batters in this drill.



Results: This drill achieves two primary things: first, it helps batters and runners learn the effectiveness of the hit and run, and further helps batters utilize their skills of hitting to a hole. But, this drill also help the fielders learn how to react to a hit and run situation and how to play the best defense against it.

This would be 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.



2.9 Hold your Shirt

Often time batters over extended themselves when they try to hit the ball. Keeping you hands in the proper position in relation to the ball is important for consistent hitting.

What you need (set up): A tee, batters (with helmets) and the players should be wearing a loose shirt (one can be provided for players in this drill).

How this drill works: When a batter sets up next to the tee with the ball on top, they are prepared to hit the ball. If they grab their shirt and wrap it around the handle and get into the ready position to hit the ball, this begins helping to keep the hands in line.

When the player goes to swing, while holding their shirt, they release the shirt upon contact with the ball. If the contact point is solid, by holding the shirt, they will learn the proper proportion to have between the ball and the hands.

Results: Too many players reach for balls, or they swing at balls that are in too close to their bodies. This drill should help players understand that they get the best contact and the most power if their hands stay at a certain distance from the contact point.



2.10 Follow Through Drill

The follow through is important to get the most fluid and powerful swing. If you are trying to stop the bat, the swing loses momentum as you slow the bat down.

What you need (set up): You need a tee for the batter to hit from, and you need a ball set up (either on a tee or other apparatus) that will be along the proper follow through plane of the batter.

How this drill works: When a batter swings through the ball, they will maintain their swing plane through the drill and first hit the ball on the tee in front of them, and then on the tee in their proper follow through plane.

If a player is not hitting the second ball then the coach must help them achieve the appropriate swing plane.

This is also a great drill to experiment with different swing planes and swing directions when teaching opposite field hitting.

Results: Having the appropriate swing plane will help the batter achieve more consistency in their battings, and ultimately help them achieve a fuller swing, which assists in increasing overall power.



2.11 Hi and Low Hitting

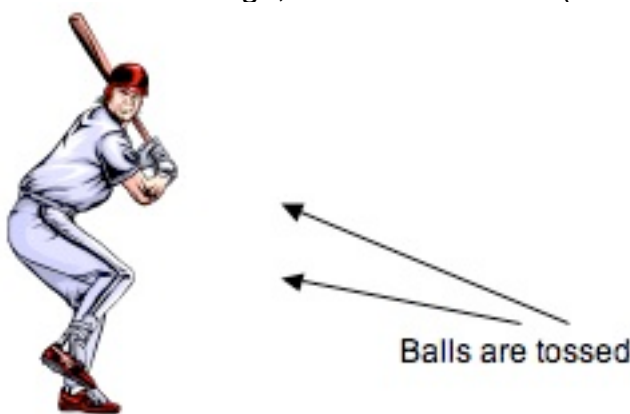
Reacting to where the pitch is takes a lot of practice and instant reaction skills.

What you need (set up): Two balls, a batter (with helmet) and the coach. It is best to do this drill against the backstop or into a batting net.

How this drill works: This is one of the more advanced drills for batting, but it is a great one to help a player learn quick reaction. The player lines up facing the batting cage or the backstop, about 15 feet away. The coach will kneel down (at a safe distance), but close enough to toss the balls for the player.

The coach will toss up two balls, one right after the other. The coach will toss a high one, then a low one, and then shout which one he wants the hitter to hit. The hitter must then hit the ball that is called.

Results: As you can plainly see, it takes a lot for the player to listen to your call, and then hit the one that you call out. But, what it does is it forces them to develop their quick reaction skills to hit the ball wherever it is. It could be high, or it could be low. (See diagram below)



Note: This drill should be run with only one player at a time, and it would be advisable for the coach (or ball tosser) to wear a protective mask or helmet.



2.12 Swing Down

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 helps prevent swinging upwards and creating fly balls.

What you need (set up): Tee (or pitchers) and a batter with an infield.

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

Results: This drill will help people to swing down at the ball, to reduce the number of times the ball pops up in the air. Pops up are easier to defend and play for the defense, and ground balls are going to be hit with regularity by players who utilize this drill.

2.13 Everyone Needs to Know the Basics

You see professional softball players hitting in the cage all of the time. They are practicing their swing in the batting circle, and they get coaching in the fundamentals of hitting the softball. This can be applied to any level of softball. The more difficult drills are not the only thing older, more experienced players can do. They would be well served to do many of the drills that have been included in the beginner and intermediate sections of this chapter.

Here are some final tips for hitting drills (at any level):

- Repetition is the key to hitting. With that said, the repetition needs to be watched carefully so that players don't develop any bad habits.
- In the early stages of teaching batting, proper instruction is also important. Learning the basics: stance, swing, and follow through.
- Hitting requires patience and practice. Teach contact and correct form before you allow young softball players to swing hard at the ball. This will benefit their game for many years to come.

3.0 Baserunning and Other Drills

Baserunning is the other area of skills that we are going to cover in this guide to drills and practice plans. This is a very important area to cover, because many of the baserunning mistakes made during a game are costly, and can be avoided by teaching your players the basics.

Most of the drills included in this section are for any age, however we have included a few drills for the beginners to start learning the bases they will be running around.

Note: I have also included several additional offensive drills for coaches to use to improve the skills of their players.

3.1 Learn the Bases



When players first start playing, it is always a good idea to instruct to them the different bases that are used. We have all seen young players playing softball run to a base other than the one they are supposed to.

What you need (set up): All you need for this drill is the attention of the players you are coaching.

How this drill works: 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.

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.

Results: The players will have a fundamental understanding of what happens during the softball game when they hit the ball and when they have to run the bases.

This is extremely important for players to learn. Once they understand the fundamentals of what they are supposed to do when they hit the ball, they get excited about running the bases.

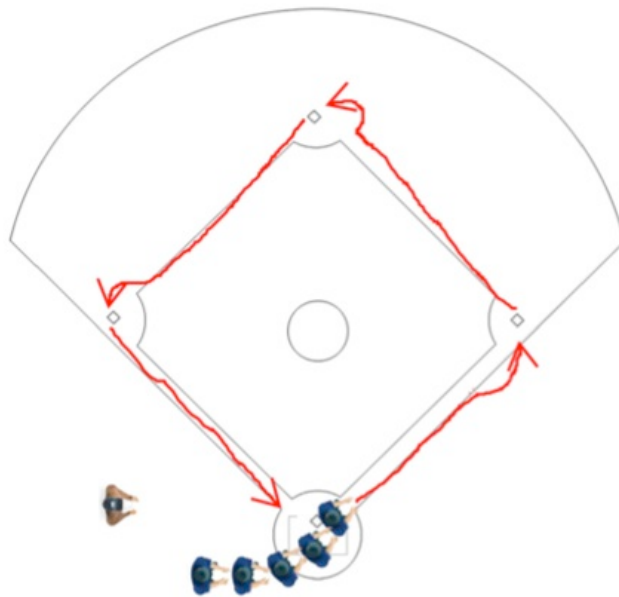
3.2 Base Relay



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

What you need (set up): All of the bases should be securely fastened and ready for baserunners. Divide your squad into two teams of relatively equal speed.

How this drill works: 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... ice cream or something.



Results: This is merely reinforcement of the last drill, but woven into a competition for the players. They will learn to run the bases in the proper order as they compete against their teammates in this baserunning drill.

3.3 Star with Two



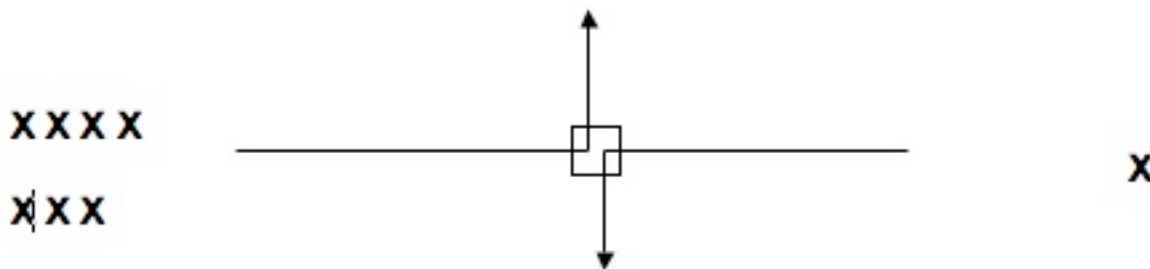
Running the bases properly to help increase the speed and decrease the amount of area covered is important to successful baserunning.

What you need (set up): 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.

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

If the players don't take the right direction on their run, they will likely end up going too wide and they will run into each other. 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.

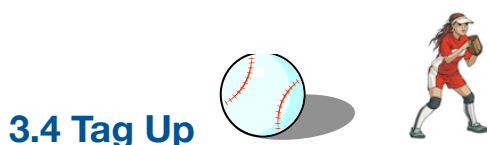
See the diagram for specific instructions:



You will notice that the players run towards the bag from opposite sides and then they hit the inside of the bag.

Note: If you want to get a little more daring, then 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.

Results: After this drill, your players should be taking a better angle to the next base, and they should have the proper technique for running the bases quicker and more effective.



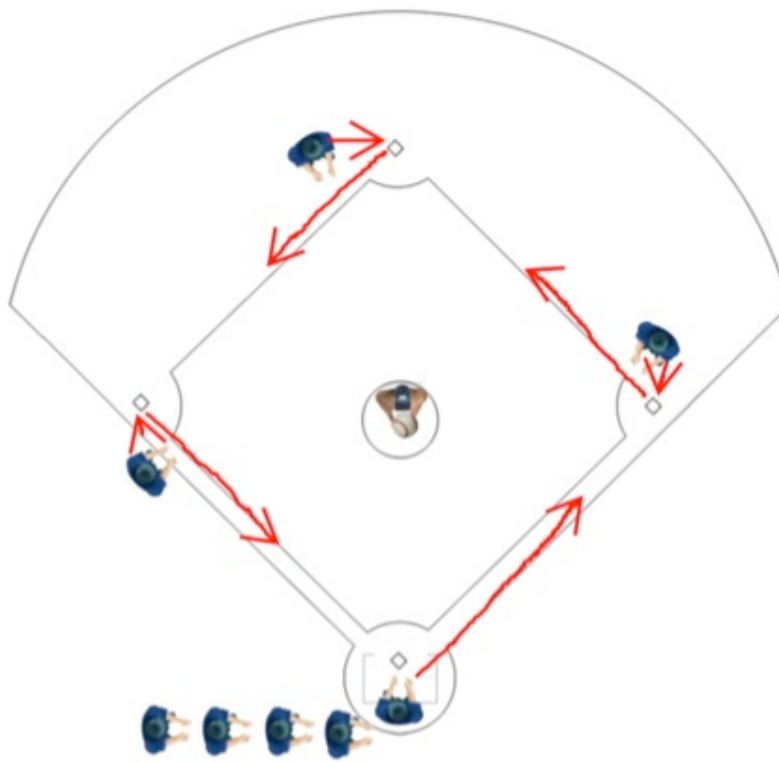
3.4 Tag Up

Getting caught not tagging up is a major frustration for coaches. Players often leave a bag too early or they don't even stay on the bag at all. Getting players prepared to tag up on fly balls can be an advantage when it's time to score runs.

What you need (set up): You will need runners on all four 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.

How this drill works: With all of the runners at their bases, they start by leading off. The coach will toss themselves 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.

Once the coach catches the ball, the players are prepared to advance to the next base. 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.

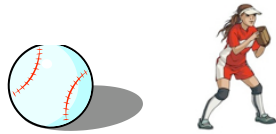


Diagrams created using Softball Blueprint Software. To learn more, visit:

www.SoftballBlueprint.com

Results: Players will learn to anticipate the ball being caught when it is a fly ball. They will be able to make a quick break on the ball after it has been caught. This is going to be very valuable when the time comes to advance runners on a fly ball.

3.5 Double Play Break Up



Sometimes the only way to break up a double play is by running towards the player rather than the base.

What you need (set up): 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.

How this drill works: 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.

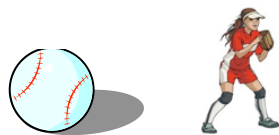
Usually, if the second baseman is throwing to first, the runner should slide to the left of the bag as the infielder goes over the bag as they run to it. If the shortstop is throwing, his or her momentum is usually taking them to the right side of the bag, so that's where the break up should occur.

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.

Result: Your players should be able to anticipate the side of the throw to first, and slide accordingly to break up the double play.

Note: 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.

3.6 Sand Sliding



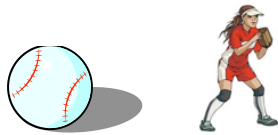
When a player must stop at a base, sliding into it is the fastest way to get there because the runner doesn't need to slow down their run. Learning to slide can be scary for younger players, but with the help of a sand pit your team will be sliding with confidence in no time.

What you need (set up): large sand area (long jump pit is perfect)

How this drill works: To begin, have your players learn the proper slide position in the sand pit. Be sure they are turned slightly onto their left side and are resting on their left buttock and the outside of their bent left leg. Have your players lean back and put both hands up in the air over and behind their head.

Next, have your players form a line behind the sand pit. Have one player at a time walk through the sand, gradually bending their knees, lowering their hips, and throwing their right leg forward while bending their left leg (performing a “slow slide”). Be sure their hands are up over their head and not reaching down to catch their fall. After all players get one try, have them take another turn at a faster speed until they are comfortable performing the slide from a run.

Result: Your team’s ability to safely get on base will increase dramatically once all your runners have mastered proper sliding technique.



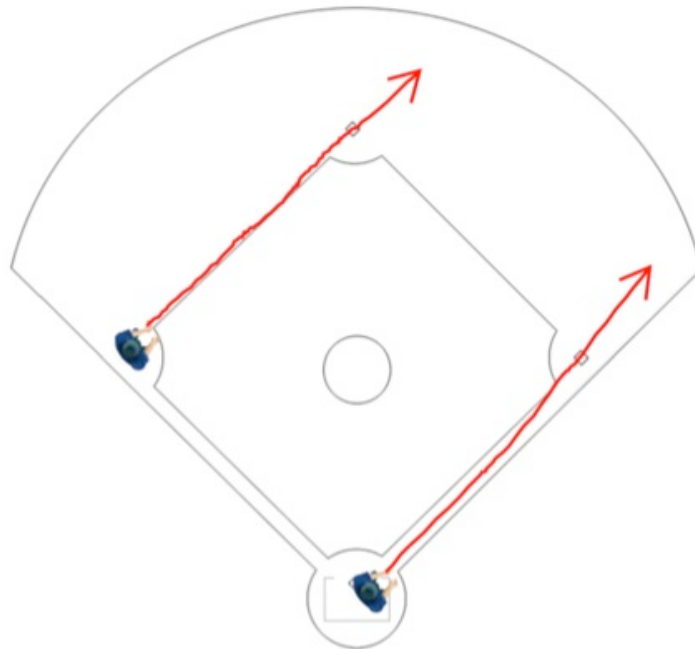
3.7 Run Through First

Teaching players to explode from the batter’s box and then run through first is a good thing to do. Many players slow their run to first early and can lose the race to first.

What you need (set up): Runners at home plate and at third base. Two lines will form at these bases – one facing first base, and one facing second base.

How this drill works: 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). 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.



Results: Once your players go through this drill, they will be better at running to first base, and taking advantage of opportunities to take second (overthrows). Also, they may get to the base before the throw more often because they are running through the bag instead of pulling up before they get there.

3.8 Baserunning Relay

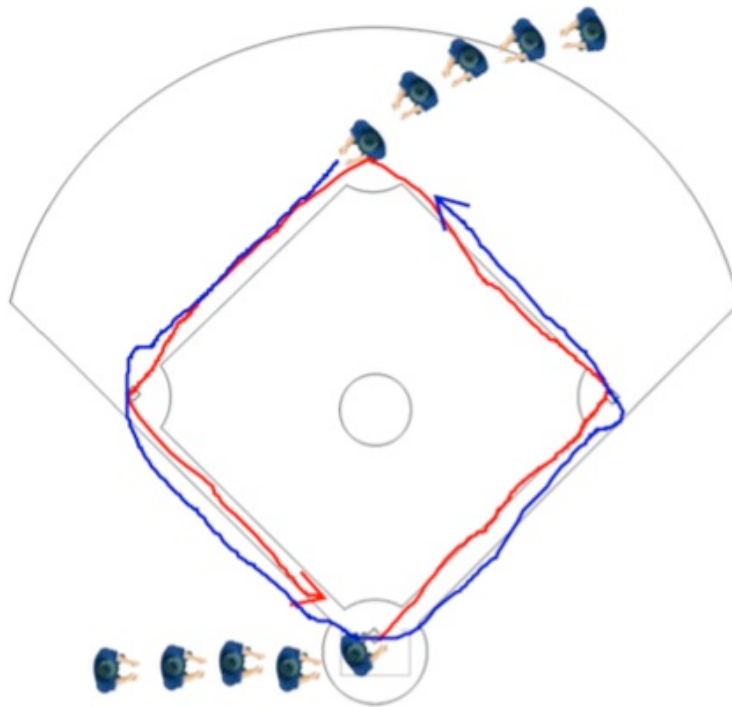


Running hard around the bases is important for the players to learn. This drill will keep them on their toes and have them compete against their teammates to stay ahead.

What you need (set up): Two lines – one at home plate, the other at second base.

How this drill works: 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. 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.



Results: Aside from getting into shape with this great conditioning drill, the players will understand the value of running the bases as fast as they can. The competition aspect of it makes them try a little bit harder, too.

3.9 Crack of the Bat



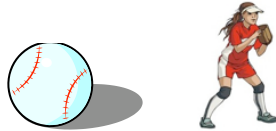
Having the right lead off and then taking off to the next base when the ball is hit can give a runner the extra they need to make it safely to the next base.

What you need (set up): A runner on first base, a pitcher, batter and a full infield.

How this drill works: Although not stealing, the player on first wants to get a good jump, without it seeming like a hit and run. This drill helps the explosiveness of a player from the base they are on by help to anticipate and then react to the ball being hit.

The runner should lead off, and be ready to spring into action when the ball is hit. The runner will get one point for leaving right at the crack of the bat, zero points for leaving early and the hitter making contact, minus one point if they are caught leaving too late after the ball is struck, and minus two points if they leave too early and the batter misses the ball, and they are left running to second. That should be an easy out for the defense.

Result: Your players will soon be able to react instantly to when the ball is hit, giving them a great jump on the defense trying to put them out.



3.10 Watch the Base Coaches

Watching what the base coach wants the runner to do is important in making sure that you don't get unnecessary outs. It's a good idea to practice the communication between runners and base coaches, and you might be able to save yourself a few outs.

What you need (set up): A full infield and outfield, a couple of runners, and a first and third base coach.

How this drill works: Have the coach hit the ball to certain areas of the field and the players need to make the plays. Once runners reach the base, the coaches need to instruct them on what to do. For example if the coach hits a shallow fly ball to right field, he or she will instruct the runner to take a slight lead and just as the ball is caught, tag up at first and wait to see if they should run.

The coach will go through many different scenarios in this drill to make sure that the runners and the base coaches are on the same page.

Result: Good communication is going to reduce the number of outs that occur because of bad baserunning. When players listen to the coaches, they are a team, and it is like having a set of eyes watching the play for the player and then using them to get around the bases.



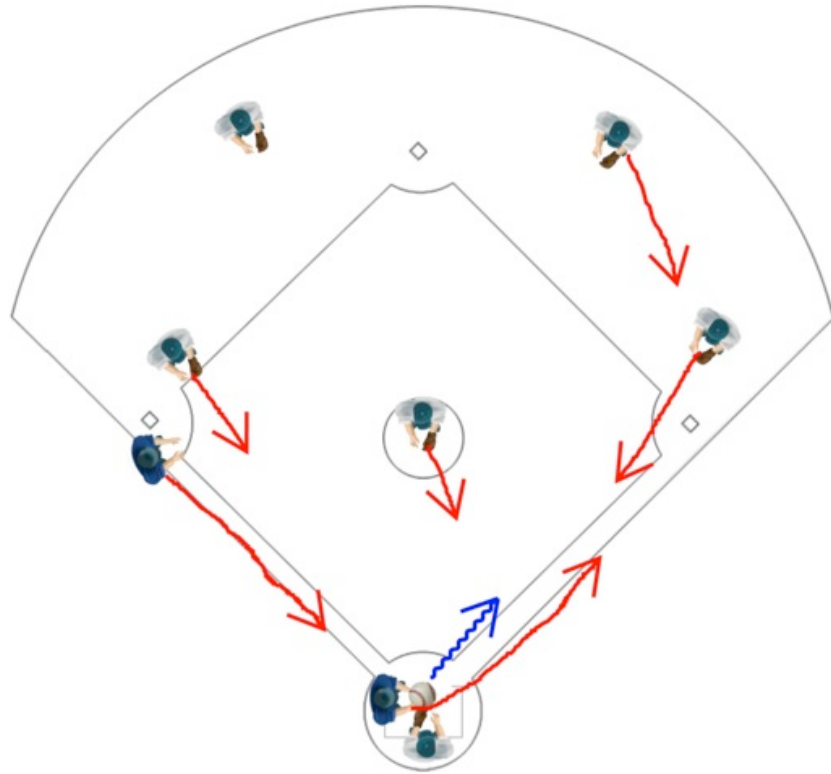
3.11 Squeeze Play

Every once in a while you can 'squeeze' this play into your arsenal of tricks. It always works best when your players know how to execute it properly.

What you need (set up): Full infield including pitcher and catcher, batter and runner on third.

How this drill works: The runner on third has to get a good jump on the pitcher as the batter squares around to bunt the ball. The bunter tries to put the ball into play at least 10 to 12 feet from the catcher. By the time anyone reacts, the player at third base should be well on his or her way home.

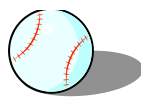
The bunt is probably the most important thing in this drill, because in order for the runner not to easily get tagged out at home, the batter must make contact with the ball and get it into play. Also the runner should focus on getting a good jump off the pitcher.



Result: Ultimately, you will add another run to the scoresheet – maybe the one that wins the game. But, once the players understand the squeeze play, they are better able to execute it.

The squeeze is a valuable play to put into a game, especially when a team expects you to try to score the run on a sacrifice fly ball.

3.12 Sacrifice Play

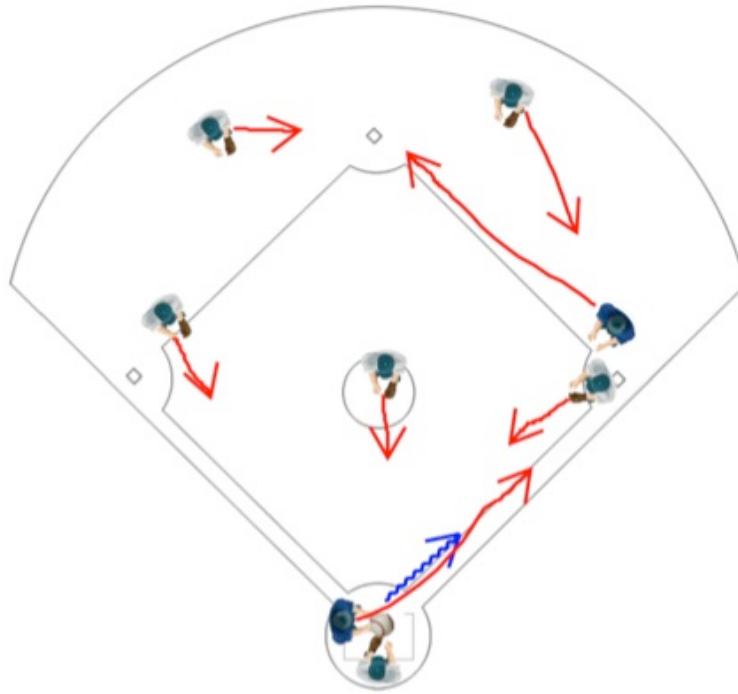


Often times during a game, players will be called upon to get a runner around the bases with a fly ball or a bunt.

What you need (set up): A full infield, a batter and a runner on first, second or third.

How this drill works: The batter must get the runner to the next base, but only using one of two plays: a bunt, or a sac fly. The fly ball must be deep enough to advance the runner and the bunt needs to be effective enough not to be a double play ball.

Batters should work on hitting a fly ball on purpose and also bunting to the best areas to avoid outs. These skills are important in this game situation.



Result: This is one of the most common plays in softball. If you can get your team to execute sacrifice plays with regularity, then you will notice your overall run total increase considerably.

3.13 Double Steal



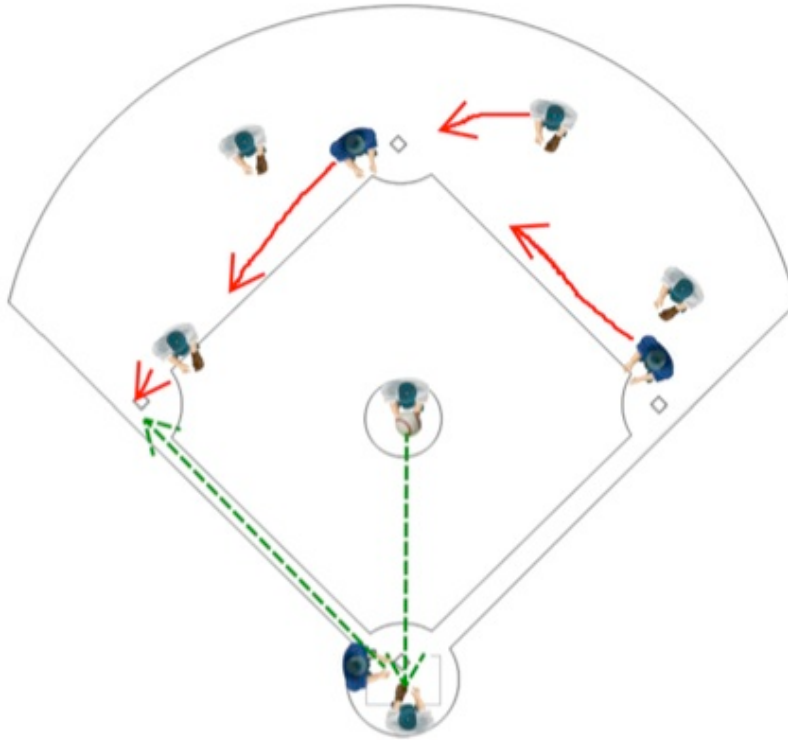
With runners on two different bases, you might want to execute a double steal to advance both runners, instead of just one.

What you need: A full infield, batter, a runner on first, and a runner on second or third.

How this drill works: The pitcher will go through his or her normal delivery and the batter will just swing at the ball and not hit it. The runner will attempt to steal two bases.

From first and third, the runner will advance to second in hopes the throw goes and the third base runner can advance home. From first and second, the hope is that both runners can advance. The offense competes against the defense in this one – if the defense gets the lead runner, it's two points, the second runner, one point. If the offense executes the double steal, they get two points.

The coach can alter the timing of the double steal, having both players leave at the same time, or staggering them.



Result: Having your players both advance is a huge offensive advantage, especially if it scores a run or takes the force off. If your players can effectively execute a double steal, you will see runs totals increase.

Effective Practice Planning

Coaches would be pulling their hair out if they had to try to come up with something off the top of their head every practice, and keep everyone on the field happy and into learning the game of softball. One of the best ways to run a smooth practice that teaches skills and provides players with an enjoyable experience is to have a practice plan.

Coming into the practice with a script for how things should run is a great way to take the pressure off you and your coaching staff and provide your players with constant instruction and interaction. In this chapter, we have provided you 25 different practice plans that will address different areas of the game of softball.

You will notice many of the drills that we have talked about in this book included in the practice plans. These drills can be shaped and modified to suit your teams needs. The practice plans are also just a guideline for you. Once you go through a few of the practice plans, you are probably going to pick a few that you like the best and go with those.

However you choose to use them, we hope that they come in handy when you teach your players the game of softball.

Here are a few tips to running a good practice:

- **Have a plan**
- **Instruct the players on all techniques involved in a drill**
- **Include fun things like competitions or games to break up constant instruction – after all, they should have fun!**
- **Don't criticize – INSTRUCT. Players respond much better to instruction than they do to ridicule and criticism.**
- **Keep the practice flowing, but include time for warm up, warm down and a few breaks for water.**
- **Run different stations that build on player skills. This gives players more repetition and increases skill set.**

Note: The practice plans are geared towards the intermediate and advanced softball player. You can insert the T-ball drills where you see fit.

Note: To run stations, use two of the practice plans at one practice, one for hitting and another for fielding skills. You will give the players more repetition.

Practice Plan #1

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	2.5 Balloon drill	Focus on proper stride towards the ball
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	2.10 Follow through drill	Watch that players have the proper FT
:45 to 1:00	2.1 From the tee	Batters need to make solid contact
1:00 to 1:10	2.7 Opposite field	Open stance / closed stance and timing
1:10 to 1:20	2.12 Swing down	Players should be hitting grounders
1:20 to 1:30	2.1 From the tee	Using all of the other drill tips
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	2.11 Hi – Low hitting	Work on the reaction time
1:45 to 1:55	3.12 Sacrifice Play	Work with hitting and base runners
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #2

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	1.9 Know where to go	Warm up fielding drills
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	1.6 Lead runner	Have players focus on where the lead runner is
:45 to 1:00	1.7 Hit the Relay	Focus on hitting the cut off man
1:00 to 1:10	1.11 Throw them out	Different runners and different places to throw the ball
1:10 to 1:20	1.12 Double Play Ball	Go from making single outs to making the double play
1:20 to 1:30	1.4 Ball to First	Pitchers and first baseman need to know
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	1.15 Catch flies	The proper approach and footwork is important
1:45 to 1:55	1.14 Pepper	A little fielding competition never hurts
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #3

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	3.8 Baserunning relay	Get around the bases quickly
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	3.3 Star with two / four	Watch for inside the bag touch not too wide
:45 to 1:00	3.7 Run through first	Full speed all the way through and right side look
1:00 to 1:10	3.9 Crack of the bat	Runner must explode off the contact
1:10 to 1:20	3.5 Double Play Break up	Anticipation of the defenders throwing side
1:20 to 1:30	3.6 Sand Sliding	Anticipate pitcher's motion to the plate
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	1.13 Pickle	For both fielding and baserunning skills
1:45 to 1:55	3.8 Baserunning relay	For conditioning and speed training
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #4

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	2.9 Hold Shirt	Watch player hand to ball distance
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	2.5 Balloon drill	Watch stride length
:45 to 1:00	2.11 Hi – Low hitting	Reaction time
1:00 to 1:10	2.1 From the tee	Work on skills just practiced in drills
1:10 to 1:20	2.6 Bunt drill	Proper squaring and placement of ball
1:20 to 1:30	2.12 Swing down	Focus on hitting solid grounders
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	2.8 Hit and Run / Make the play	Combine the two drills
1:45 to 1:55	3.11 Squeeze play / make the play	Combine the two drills
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #5

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	1.4 Ball to first	Use all positions for older players
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	1.13 Pickle	For baserunners and fielders
:45 to 1:00	1.10 Catch and throw	Proper footwork and approach to set up a throw out in the infield
1:00 to 1:10	1.8 Tag out	Players need to recognize when they need to make a tag out instead of force
1:10 to 1:20	1.14 Infielders: pepper	
1:20 to 1:30	2.6 Bunt drill	-
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	3.6 Sand Sliding	Make sure runners do not ump into landing slide position
1:45 to 1:55	3.8 Baserunning relay	For conditioning
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #6

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	3.6 Sand Sliding	Be sure players keep their hands up during slide
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	3.7 Run through first	Run all of the way through and look right for overthrows
:45 to 1:00	3.10 Watch the base coaches	Can be used with fielders and batters
1:00 to 1:10	3.3 Star with four	Hit the inside of the base and narrow angles
1:10 to 1:20	3.4 & 3.12 Tag up / sac fly	Combine the drills
1:20 to 1:30	1.13 Pickle	Pit baserunners and infielders
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	1.14 Pepper	To elimination
1:45 to 1:55	3.8 Baserunning relay	For conditioning
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #7

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	3.6 Sand Sliding	After mastery in the sand, try sliding on wet grass or a few inches of snow
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	3.7 Run through first	Run through bag and look right for over-throw
:45 to 1:00	3.9 Crack of the bat	Watch for early leads and batter misses
1:00 to 1:10	1.6 Lead runner	Vary the lead runner
1:10 to 1:20	1.7 Hit the Relay	Don't let players throw all of the way to base
1:20 to 1:30	3.8 Baserunning relay	For conditioning
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	Scrimmage	
1:45 to 1:55		
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #8

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	3.6 Sand Sliding with catcher throws	No catching fall with hands
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	2.6 Bunt drill	Tally points
:45 to 1:00	2.6 Bunt drill	Combine with bunt drill
1:00 to 1:10	3.11 Squeeze play	With infielders
1:10 to 1:20	Sac fly	Watch runners tag up then explode to next base
1:20 to 1:30	3.13 Double steal	Runner timing
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	Scrimmage	Use scenarios practiced in earlier drills
1:45 to 1:55		
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #9

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	2.7 Opposite field	Open and closed stance and timing
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	2.8 Hit and run	Use opposite field hitting
:45 to 1:00	1.10 Catch and throw	Footwork and momentum
1:00 to 1:10	3.4 Tag up	Watch for early leads
1:10 to 1:20	Catch and throw and tag up	Combine the drills
1:20 to 1:30	Sac fly, tag up and catch and throw	Get batters, fielders and runners working together
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	Scrimmage	Runs can only be scored on sac plays
1:45 to 1:55		
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #10

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	2.4 Stance	Fundamentals
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	2.5 Balloon drill	Watch stride length
:45 to 1:00	2.9 Hold shirt	Hand to ball distance
1:00 to 1:10	2.10 Follow through drill	Hit both balls and ensure follow through
1:10 to 1:20	2.12 Swing down drill	Hit grounders
1:20 to 1:30	2.1 From the tee	Practice all of the elements of hitting
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45		
1:45 to 1:55		
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #11

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	1.6 Lead runner	Vary the runners
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	1.16 Make the play	Vary the scenario
:45 to 1:00	1.9 Know where to go	Vary the scenarios
1:00 to 1:10	1.12 Double play ball	Timing and the turn
1:10 to 1:20	1.11 Throw them out	Add runners in different spots
1:20 to 1:30	3.8 Baserunning relay	For conditioning
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	2.1 From the tee	Practice fundamentals when tired from practice
1:45 to 1:55		
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #12

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	3.8 Baserunning relay	For conditioning
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	1.7 Hit the Relay	Don't overthrow the relay man
:45 to 1:00	Sac fly	Combine with hit the relay – runners versus fielders
1:00 to 1:10	1.4 Ball to first	Combine with run through first – runners versus fielders
1:10 to 1:20	1.15 Catch flies	Footwork and anticipation of ball flight
1:20 to 1:30	1.10 Catch and throw	Footwork and momentum for throw
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	2.1 From the tee	Practice fundamentals when tired from practice
1:45 to 1:55		
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #13

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	1.14 Pepper	To elimination
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	1.13 Pickle	Runners versus infielders
:45 to 1:10	3.6 Sand Sliding	No catching fall with hands
1:10 to 1:20	1.4 Ball to First	With first, second, catcher and pitcher
1:20 to 1:30	2.6 Bunt drill	Reaction time to square around
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	2.1 From the tee	Fundamentals when tired from practice
1:45 to 1:55		
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #14

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	3.3 Star with 2	Inside of bag
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	3.3 Star with 4	Inside of bag and narrow angle
:45 to 1:00	3.7 Run through first	No slowing down and look right for over-throws
1:00 to 1:10	3.8 Baserunning relay	For conditioning
1:10 to 1:20	3.4 Tag up	Watch for early leads
1:20 to 1:30	3.5 Double play break up	Anticipate the side of the throw
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	Scrimmage	Watch baserunning skills during scrimmage
1:45 to 1:55		
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #15

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	1.7 Hit the relay	Watch for overthrows
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	3.4 Tag up	Combine with hit the relay
:45 to 1:00	1.15 Catch flies	Footwork and anticipation of ball flight
1:00 to 1:10	1.10 Catch and throw	Footwork and momentum for throw
1:10 to 1:20	3.4 Tag out	Combine all of the previous drills for tag out plays
1:20 to 1:30	3.10 Base coaches	Players need to pay attention to coaches
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	Scrimmage	
1:45 to 1:55		
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #16

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	3.8 Baserunning relay	For conditioning
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	2.1 From the tee	Fundamentals
:45 to 1:00	2.5 Balloon drill	Watch stride length
1:00 to 1:10	2.1 From the tee	See if stride length is still good
1:10 to 1:20	2.10 Follow through	Hit both balls
1:20 to 1:30	2.1 From the tee	To make sure follow through is there
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	2.12 & 1.16 Swing down with make the play	Combine drills
1:45 to 1:55	3.8 Baserunning relay	For conditioning
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #17

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	3.8 Baserunning relay	For conditioning
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	3.3 Star with 2	Inside of the bag and narrow angle to second
:45 to 1:00	3.3 Star with 4	Inside of the bag and narrow angle to second
1:00 to 1:10	2.4 Stance	Watch for fundamentals
1:10 to 1:20	2.5 Balloon drill	Watch stride length
1:20 to 1:30	2.9 Hold Shirt	Hand to ball distance
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	1.6 Lead runner	Vary the lead runner
1:45 to 1:55	1.14 Pepper	To elimination
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #18

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	1.15 Catch flies	Watch footwork and anticipation of ball flight
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	1.10 Catch and throw	Footwork and throwing momentum
:45 to 1:00	3.4 Tag up with Sac fly drill	Practice with catch and throw groups
1:00 to 1:10	Throw to first	With run through first (28)
1:10 to 1:20	1.9 Know where to go	Different scenarios
1:20 to 1:30	3.8 Baserunning relay	For conditioning
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	Scrimmage	
1:45 to 1:55		
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #19

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	2.1 From the tee	Watch the fundamentals
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	2.7 Opposite field hitting	Closed stance, open stance and timing
:45 to 1:00	2.8 Hit and run	Work on the jump and aiming the hit
1:00 to 1:10	1.12 Double play ball	Work on timing and the turn
1:10 to 1:20	1.16 Make the play	Create new scenarios
1:20 to 1:30	1.14 Pepper	To elimination for scrimmage teams
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	Scrimmage	
1:45 to 1:55		
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #20

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	2.1 From the tee	Hitting fundamentals
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	1.6 Lead runner	Vary the lead runner position
:45 to 1:00	2.12 Swing down	Hit grounders
1:00 to 1:10	1.16 & 2.12 Make the play / Swing down	Combine the drills
1:10 to 1:20	1.12 & 3.5 Double play ball, double play break up	Combine the drills
1:20 to 1:30	3.4 Sac fly and tag up	Combine the drills
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	Scrimmage	
1:45 to 1:55		
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #21

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	3.8 Baserunning relay	For conditioning
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	1.12 Double play ball	Vary the scenarios
:45 to 1:00	3.5 Double play break up	Pit baserunners against fielders
1:00 to 1:10	2.6 Bunt drill	Tally the points
1:10 to 1:20	2.6 Bunt drill	Batters versus fielders
1:20 to 1:30	3.11 Squeeze play	Batters versus fielders
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	1.10 Catch and throw	Watch for footwork and momentum
1:45 to 1:55	Sac fly drill	With batters versus outfielders
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #22

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	3.8 Baserunning relay	For conditioning
:35 to :40	Water break	-
:40 to 1:00	3.6 Sand Sliding	No catching fall with hands
1:00 to 1:10	1.4 Ball to First	First baseman, second baseman and pitcher and catcher
1:10 to 1:20	3.11 Squeeze drill	With infielders versus batters
1:20 to 1:30	Sac fly drill	With outfielders versus runners
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	Dbl steal	Catchers versus runners
1:45 to 1:55	3.8 Baserunning relay	For conditioning
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #23

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	2.4 Stance	Fundamentals
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	2.5 Balloon drill	Stride length
:45 to 1:00	2.9 Hold Shirt	Hand to ball distance
1:00 to 1:10	2.11 Hi-low hitting	Reaction time on ball
1:10 to 1:20	2.10 Follow through drill	Hit both balls
1:20 to 1:30	2.12 Swing down	With infield and make the play
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	2.8 Hit and run	With infielders
1:45 to 1:55	3.8 Base running relay	For conditioning
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #24

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	1.6 Lead runner	Vary the players and the lead runner
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	1.7 Hit the Relay	Use with sac fly drill
:45 to 1:00	1.8 Tag out	Vary the situations
1:00 to 1:10	1.9 Know where to go	Vary the situations
1:10 to 1:20	1.16 Make the play	Vary the scenarios
1:20 to 1:30	1.10 Catch and throw	Watch for footwork and throwing with momentum
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	1.13 Pickle	Baserunners vs. infielders
1:45 to 1:55	1.14 Pepper	To elimination
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Practice Plan #25

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

Time	Drill	Coaching Tips
00 to :10	Throwing warm ups	One knee, stationary, etc
:10 to :15	Full body stretch	Shoulder, legs, groin, and lower back
:15 to :25	Light jog around the outfield	Limbering up and preparing for drills
:25 to :35	3.8 Baserunning relay	For conditioning
:35 to :38	Water break	-
:38 to :45	3.3 Start with 4	Inside corner of base
:45 to 1:00	3.7 Run through first	Run through the base and look right for overthrow
1:00 to 1:10	3.6 Sand Sliding	No catching fall with hands
1:10 to 1:20	3.9 Crack of the bat	Watch for early take offs on misses
1:20 to 1:30	3.5 Double play break up	Anticipate the side of the throw
1:30 to 1:35	Water break	-
1:35 to 1:45	3.4 Tag up	Run with sac fly drill
1:45 to 1:55	3.8 Baserunning relay	For conditioning
1:55 to 2:00	Cool down	Light throwing or hitting and general stretching

Coach's Notes:

Customizable Practice Plan

Date Used: _____ Coach: _____ Team: _____

TIME	DRILL	COACHING TIPS
00:00 - 00:10	Warmup	Loosen up and work on skills
00:10 - 00:15	Team Stretch	Captain leads
00:15 - 00:25		
00:25 - 00:35		
00:35 - 00:45		
00:45 - 00:55		
00:55 - 01:00	Water break	
01:00 - 01:10		
01:10 - 01:25		
01:25 - 01:30	Water break	
01:30 - 01:50		
01:50 - 02:00	Cool down	Light stretching, warm down

Coaches Notes:

Preparing Your Softball Team

After putting them through the drills and having a structured practice plan, you are most certainly going to notice a great difference in the skill level of your players.

By putting them through many of these drills, you are preparing them for many of the game situations, and giving them the skills to succeed in these areas.

Coaching softball isn't always easy. You have a lot of players of different skill levels and they need to be brought along at a reasonable pace. It's also important to keep the practices enjoyable for the players. They will learn more if the practice is structured for them to garner a little bit of fun out of it too.

It was stressed throughout much of this book that certain things are key to developing your players skills. Here are those elements once again:

- Proper instruction
- Repetition
- Coach support instead of criticism
- Enjoyment

We hope that by using our book of drills and practice plans that you will be able to help your players reach their full potential!

Best of Luck!

Recommended Resources

The Coaching Essentials:

Softball Drills & Practice Plans - Would you like to have 25 pre-designed practice plans at your fingertips? My ebook, "Softball Drills & Practice Plans" is jam packed with over 50 unique, fun and effective softball drills. The drills are fully organized into clipboard-ready practice plans... so you can prepare for practice in just 5 short minutes. Includes softball tryout plans and my own "Team Selection Matrix". Perfect for the beginner coach looking to get organized, or for the experienced coach looking for fun, innovative ways to teach fundamental softball skills. (\$34.68)

For more information visit:

<http://www.softballspot.com>

Softball Blueprint - Designing your own animated plays and drills can be as easy as 1-2-3. Softball Blueprint software allows you to create stunningly effective animated drills and plays and share them with your team in 3 super easy steps. (from \$49.95)

For more information visit:

<http://www.softballblueprint.com>

Online Clinics:

Underground Hitting Secrets Clinic - Every book, magazine article, and instructional video is just dead wrong about hitting- this clinic reveals 7 simple secrets that will improve your players' skills forever. The focus is on hitting mechanics... the specific "underground" secrets of stance, spine angle, head tilt, hand position and swing path that nobody seems to get right... and nobody ever teaches. Discover the 6 biggest mistakes hitters make and find out how to quickly correct even the most difficult-to-cure bad habits. (\$49.95)

For more information visit:

<http://www.coachkennybuford.com/ar/hitting.html>

Signs and Signals Clinic - Discover the secrets to a mega-effective on-field communication system that will give your team a massive mental edge on the competition. Find out how to make use of verbal, touch, and descriptive hand signals that are simple enough for your team to memorize and recall easily, yet deceptive enough to prevent other teams from "cracking your code". (\$29.95)

For more information visit:

<http://www.coachkennybuford.com/signs/fullstory.html>

Must-Have DVD Packages:

Sue Enquist's Hitting Bootcamp - Discover Sue Enquist's softball coaching secrets that will boost your hitting game to the next level FAST...World's most natural Softball Hitting System will have your players crushing the ball with lightning quick bat speed and titanic power - without even trying! You'll see how she kept her UCLA team on top of the rankings year in and year out. (\$239.99 + S/H)

For more information visit:

<http://www.softballspot.com/sp/hittingbootcamp.html>

Pitching Mastery Program (Featuring Dee Dee Weiman and Sue Enquist) - Discover the best kept coaching secrets behind softballs greatest pitchers. NCAA pitching guru and former All-American Dee Dee Weiman pulls back the curtain on her stunningly effective system for coaching softball pitchers. This is a complete system for coaching your pitchers, including mechanics, drills, mental training and more. (\$159.99 + S/H)

For more information visit:

<http://www.softballspot.com/sp/pitchingmastery.html>

Slap Hitting Mastery (Featuring Darren Mueller, North Dakota State University Head Softball Coach) - Slap Hitting Mastery presents a detailed overview of how to effectively put the ball in play and exert maximum pressure on the defense using slap hitting techniques. All key factors involved in sound slap hitting are covered including footwork, developmental drills, drag bunting, and more (designed for coaches working with beginning and experienced slap hitters). (\$39.99 +S/H)

For more information visit:

<http://www.softballspot.com/sp/slaphitting.html>

Softball Coaching Aids:

Solo Hitting Machine - This is the world's first "Self Contained" hitting machine that allows your batter to swing full speed at a moving target (just like real batting practice)...then get instant feedback on swing accuracy and power. You're batters will get a massive number of swing reps in only 5 minutes. Can be set up inside or outside. (\$249 + S/H)

For more information visit:

<http://www.coachkennybuford.com/ar/solohitting.html>

New coaching tools are being added all the time, for a current list of the best coaching resources we offer, please visit our main catalog at:

<http://www.softballspot.com/catalog.html>