

DRILLS & GAMES

THROWING DRILLS

HULA HOOP ON FENCE

1. Hang Hula Hoops along the fence.
2. Make a line that they cannot cross to throw from; move line back as skill level progresses.

MESSY BACK YARD

(USE TENNIS OR WHIFFLE BALLS)

1. Divide kids into 2 groups, one group on each side of a line or fence;
2. Each group starts with the same # of balls on each side
3. Give them 30 seconds to one minute to throw the balls back and forth as fast as possible to see which team ends up with less ball on their side. (*Object is to keep your "backyard" clean*).

One Knee Throwing

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

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

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

A good follow through toward the target is important.

BONK THE BUCKET

Put an empty bucket upright on a tee (take out neck insert first).

Line up players between 1st & 3rd base across pitcher position. Players throw at bucket simultaneously.

Recommendations:

Roll balls out to all players, have them find grip, then wait for coach;

On coach's words, players: TURN, POINT, STEP, and THROW at the bucket.

Pace appropriately for your team.

Big cheer if anyone hits the bucket. They like this. Really.

Ass't coach helps correct kids who need 1-1 help with mechanics, body position, and so on during this drill.

Hustle (“Charge It”) Game

- Line up players single file, or in two parallel lines.
- Roll balls to players, have them field it, throw to coach, and return to end of line.
- Fast moving. Many skills/lessons to teach here.

Recommendations:

- Teach to ‘catch & cover’ ball when fielding grounders, then stand and throw.
- No diving on ball – field it on two feet!
- Players should charge short or slow-moving balls. Do many to teach this. If two lines & even # of players, make a game of which line can field all its grounders first without an overthrow back to coach.
- Coaches should have a pile of balls at feet. Let overthrows go. Keep it moving fast.
- With weak players, roll balls gently. Better players: Roll faster, or throw hopping grounders.
- Mark a ‘start’ line for players (or they will creep up to you fast). Use balls, or a bat, to mark where they start.

BOUNCE TO THE BUCKET!

- It's good to learn throwing accuracy at an early age – this is a fun game to learn! What you need – Set up a bucket or box at the first base. (You can set up more than one station for this drill)
- Line up kids at each station about 10 feet away to start.

How this drill works

- ⇒ The first thrower steps up and tries to get the ball into the box or bucket – and they get 10 points. If they hit the side of the bucket they will get 5 points. The closest ball to the bucket will get 2 points.

You can increase the difficulty of the drill by increasing the distance that the players have to throw.

But, don't sacrifice the distance for the accuracy. Once the kids gain the accuracy, then in time they will build the strength to throw the ball a greater distance.

FIELDING DRILLS

Work on good ready position

Feet shoulder width apart, hands out in front at waist level with palms up (not on ground to start), slight bend in knees and at waist

>>>Use "**Simon Says**" as a way to have fun and keep them listening.

Alligator Hands

Using both glove and other hand to secure ball in glove when caught.

Ground Ball Practice

Slide laterally to get into position in front of ball, hands drop to ground with both hands out in front (ball should be fielded out in front, not between legs), knees bent, head up – then shift into proper throwing position either by moving feet or by “crow hopping” (a short hop) into throwing position (ie sideways, as described above)

POP FLIES

Tough at this age for many kids – one good drill is to use tennis balls and *either throw or hit them with a tennis racket*, which helps gets start to judge balls hit into the air and reduces the fear/injury factor.

Fielding - Spread players out and roll/hit to them without calling their names (teaches focus). **Teach:** closest person gets it. Have them throw to another parent/coach standing where 1st should be. Speed up so they're always on their toes.

Field ground balls at second base position and throw to first – then graduate to shortstop position over time.

Count Game

- A simple catching game. Line up player's arms-length apart, all facing a coach.
- Coach underhand tosses a ball lightly to each player in succession (*switch to overhand after a few practices / when they are ready*)
- Count # of consecutive catches, and see how high the team can get. Restart at 1 after anyone drops ball. Try to get to a higher number than best one from last practice.

Recommendations:

- ⇒ Start only 5' away from players. Move back as season progresses.
- ⇒ All throws to player's chest (above waist!) for first few weeks. Then switch to throws to right, to left, or higher 'pop-up' catches
- ⇒ Emphasize: Correct glove position. '*Squeeze and freeze*' on catches.

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- Fast moving. Many skills/lessons to teach here.

Recommendations:

- ◇ Teach to ‘catch & cover’ ball when fielding grounders, then stand and throw.
- ◇ No diving on ball – field it on two feet!
- ◇ Players should charge short or slow-moving balls. Do many to teach this. If two lines & even # of players, make a game of which line can field all its grounders first without an overthrow back to coach.
- ◇ Let overthrows go. Keep it moving fast.
- ◇ With weak players, roll balls gently. Better players: Roll faster, or throw hopping grounders.
- ◇ Mark a ‘start’ line for players (or they will creep up to you fast).

BLOCK THE BALL

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

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

How this drill works – With this drill coaches need to first instruct their players on how to move to get in front of the ball.

- *Start the players off in the ready position (hands on the knees, slightly bent, and with their head up watching the play).*

The coaches or volunteers should roll the ball directly at the players at first, but then to either side. The player needs to shuffle to get their body in front of the ball to knock it down.

CALL THE BALL

Teach players to understand that the closest player to the ball is to say, **“I’VE GOT IT”**. They can scream, yell or just say it!

FIRST BASE DRILL

- Coach hits or rolls grounder to the players on first base (lined up in a line of 4-6 player)
- Player tries to scoop the ball, set and then make an accurate throw to the coach.
- Making sure the player has control of the ball, faces their target and throws the ball.

BATTING DRILLS

HITTING OFF THE TEE

You can do this into a backstop or tall fence to get more reps, or can have the other members of the group fielding and throwing batted balls toward a bucket or coach at the pitcher's mound – *remember to avoid having all kids standing around in the field while one kid is batting.*

INVISIBLE BAT DRILL

Teaching the kids the proper swing is important to building a foundation for hitting the ball.

What you need – Line the kids up on the first and third baselines, and ask them to get into a **batters stance**.

How this drill works – This will be a fun drill for the kids, as they get to show off their swing without the bat as an impediment. When they line up, ask them to assume the **batter's stance**. They should have their arms up with their hands raised to their ears and their back elbow raised.

When you call out '**swing**', all of the kids will show you their swing with the invisible bat. At this stage, you (and assistant coaches) can view the swings of each player and you can make small adjustments to the swings

SOFT TOSS – also can do this into a fence or backstop – batter hits into the fence, coach is kneeling and faces batter about 5 feet away and directly in front of batter, “soft toss” ball underhanded toward and out in front of batter, who is in stance and in ready hitting position, to swing at ball and hit it into fence

Also can use a larger ball – i.e. a kiddie soccer ball or a small beach ball to hit off tee – *this emphasizes taking a good hard cut, especially for kids whose swings are tentative*

Batting Skills – 4 steps – Stance, Focus, Swing, Follow-Thru

Stance

Feet in straight line to pitcher, shoulder with apart

Knees slightly bent

Mark where toe should be lined up in batter's box

Swing

Back foot stays planted

Level down then level

Rotation of hips to face the pitcher

FOCUS

- ◆ Head stays down through swing
- ◆ Mark a spot on the ball – ask player if he/she saw the mark on the ball (*mark half the balls*)

FOLLOW THRU

- ◆ Swing hard thru ball, not just ‘to’ ball
- ◆ **‘Squash the bug’** with full 90-degree turn of back foot. Back toes still in place firmly on ground.
- ◆ Head down on plate, not looking up at pitcher or hit ball.
- ◆ Finish with hands between shoulder and top of head
- ◆ Check swing with three things in follow thru: Balance, two hands on bat, head down facing plate.

FUN TEAM DRILLS

PICKLE (both individual and whole team at one time – kids loves this – you can tag kids out and get them down to one “survivor”). Three players, two chasing one down to tag them out.

BASE RUNNING (chasing or being chased by a coach is always fun), sliding practice (kids at this age love to slide)

BALL SCRAMBLE (throw all balls out of bucket/
bag in various directions – **time the team for
how long it takes for all the balls to be put back
in the bag/bucket**)

RUNNING RIGHT: Teach players to run on
the balls of their feet (on their toe's is often
what kids call it)

Freeze Tag Drill w/Ball and Glove

TWO Players will be “it”. These players will have the ball in their glove. The two players that are “it” will chase the other players and they will have to tag those players with their gloves. If the ball comes out of the glove, then the player is tagged is NOT frozen.

Variation: To be “unfrozen” another player must go underneath their legs or arms.

Triangle Relay Drill *(slightly more advanced)*

This throwing and fielding drill might be best for more advanced or older T-ballers

What you need – Match up two players and a coach, and if you have parent volunteers you can have several stations for this drill.

How this drill works – This drill works on a player's ability to field the ball (in the outfield for example), and then get the ball back to the relay player and then back to the coach or the parent volunteer.

Start the players out about 30 feet away from each other, and the coach about another 15 feet from the 'relay' player. This drill begins with the coach rolling a grounder to the player that is furthest away. That player must stop the ball, control it, pick it up and make a good throw to the relay player.

The relay player must then grab the ball from the glove and then make a good throw to the coach. Repeat this drill and switch the players.

Have Fun

Try Hard

Be a Good Sport