



## **Berlin Youth Baseball – Getting the most out of Practice**

**Goal of this document:** To help coaches make sure they're getting the most out of practice. Sometimes you can get into a situation where a practice felt like more of just an un-organized play session for the youth with little being taught. We want to try to avoid that and make sure each practice the youth leave having learned something and gotten a good amount of action so that muscle memory starts kicking in on activities like hitting, pitching, and fielding. Below are some tips for getting the most out of practice ...

**Repetition is key:** Repetition is the key to success in a practice. Teach the youth a proper technique and then ask them to do it, over and over. We're not talking 5 times, we're talking 100 or more times. This may seem like a lot, but you'll quickly realize that youth at all ages can throw a ball 100 times to their partner in a matter of minutes and swing the bat 100 times just a quick also.

**Live Hitting/Scrimmage is not always the best:** While your players probably prefer to just start practice immediately with live hitting (off a coach or pitcher) and a essentially a scrimmage game, that it not always what's best for your team. If you think about it, if you do a 1 hour live hitting scrimmage with your team, where you have a youth or coach pitching, and players take turns going into the dugout for their turn to hit, on average you might be lucky to get each player to bat 2 or 3 times. Each at-bat, you'll probably have a handful of bad pitches or balls where your whole defensive team is sitting there doing nothing waiting for something to happen and your batter is not swinging waiting for a good pitch. At the end of practice, if each batter got 10 good swings and each defensive player got 2 or 3 balls hit to them, that's about it. That's unfortunately in most situations not going to be considered a good practice from a coaching and learning perspective because there was no repetition and players didn't gain any muscle memory. Instead your 1 hour practice would've been much better spent doing a multitude of different activities including 1.) some partner throwing drills where each player threw and caught several hundred balls with each other 2.) some tee or soft toss hitting where each player got well over 100 swings into the net 3.) some coach groundball or flyball drills where each player received perhaps 30 or 40 hits off the bat from the coach that they had to field. A practice like that, with lots of repetition if going to vastly improve your youth team's skills over a simple live hitting / scrimmage practice.

**Repetition in throwing/catching:** When your youth are warming up with their partner, 5 minutes is not enough, 40 throws where they dropped 10 of them is not enough. Challenge the youth by telling them you need to see 100 “successful catches” with their partner. That means, if they drop it, it doesn’t count. Keep going until they get 100 good ones, and then they can sit down.

**Repetition in fielding:** Get youth lined up in a line at an infield position and hit the first person in the line a ground ball. They field it and throw it to first and then go to the back of the line. Repeat this for each player in line, and go through the entire line over and over until each boy gets a good number, like 20 or so groundballs they’ve field. Similarly, do the same in the outfield and hit or throw them flyballs, they catch it and throw it into first. Do this in a line, and go through the line many times. If you have multiple coaches, break these lines into much smaller groups and have each coach do different things to keep the repetition going.

**Repetition in hitting:** Tell them if they’re at the tee, hitting the ball 10 times into the net and slowly walking to pick up the balls with a 30 second pause between each swing just isn’t enough. Get them to move quickly at the tees, tell them you want to see 50 good swings, that have to hit the center of the tee or net. If it doesn’t hit the center, it doesn’t count. Get them to move with a purpose, loading up that tee over and over (or having a partner load it for them, or similarly do this with soft toss). You want them swinging enough times over and over that muscle memory starts kicking in.