

Highland Baseball – Bullpens (Pitching practice)

Bullpens:

- o A “bullpen” is a nickname for a pitcher practicing their pitching on the side in between outings. It can also be referred to as “sidework”
- o To keep consistency, we will refer to it as a “bullpen”
- o A bullpen should be used as supplemental practice to a pitcher’s performances in live games
- o A bullpen should be thrown after having proper rest from a live game outing and enough in advance of their next anticipated live game outing.
- o MLB and USA Baseball have issued recommended rest time in between outings based on the number of pitches a pitcher throws as well as their age. We recommend you become familiar with these.

Here is a link: <https://www.mlb.com/pitch-smart/pitching-guidelines>

- o As an example, if a pitcher, say 13 years old, throws 60 pitches on Saturday, they really should have around 3 days of rest before pitching again.
- o To count this, it would be Sunday, Monday, Tuesday as the three days and then Wednesday could be another “pitch” day either in a live game or a practice bullpen.

- o It is perfectly ok for pitchers to play catch the immediate days after they pitch, but care should be taken to make sure they aren't forcing this if they are sore or hurting.

- o This is one of the reasons we are starting pre-season work so players can throw and get their arms in shape and then be able to begin bullpen work to prepare for live games.

- o We also want the coaches to encourage pitching practice by as many players as possible in order to grow our pitching depth so kids can have regular rest after pitching.

- o During a bullpen, the number of pitches a pitcher throws really depends on when you think their next outing might be.

- o If they know they are going to pitch on Friday, the Wednesday bullpen might only be 15-20 pitches.

- o During a bullpen, the focus of the pitcher should be creating and practicing good movement patterns in their windup or stretch.

- o The focus should also be on locating their fastballs consistently.

- o The catcher could be a teammate or a dad, and the catcher should move the target in and out and keeping it low.

- o For example, we like to see two pitches on the right side of the plate located at the knees, then move to the left side of the plate with two pitches.
- o This gets the pitchers used to avoiding the center of the plate (danger zone).
- o If the kids are 12 or older, they should be throwing their bullpens mostly from the stretch.
- o The stretch is the position they will pitch from with runners on base. It is also the only time they are ever in trouble and they need to become VERY comfortable pitching from the stretch
- o The bullpen can also be a great time to work on other pitches
- o Another very efficient use of time is to have a hitter standing in while a pitcher is throwing a bullpen.
- o This helps the hitter track pitches (training their eyes) and gets the pitcher comfortable with having a hitter standing in.
- o Make the hitters stand in from both the left and right side of the plate.
- o Another good measuring tool is to get the kids used to throwing strikes in their bullpens. Have them keep track of this. The higher percentage of strikes, often the more successful the pitcher will become

- o Coaches need to be disciplined about helping ALL the players schedule bullpen time so they can practice and keep getting better throughout the season.
- o Throwing a bullpen as a pitcher is just like watering your vegetables in the garden. Do it and they will grow. Don't and they will not be successful.

There are many more things that can be practiced in a bullpen. Ask your fellow coaches, commissioners or the PDC for ideas and tips on how to get the most out of your bullpens and what is working for other teams/players.