

Games and Team Bonding

General Comment

Suggest ending practices with a game or team competition. Communicate to the players that games/competition are contingent on the players demonstrating ACE (**A**ttitude-**C**oachable-**E**ffort). Recommend structuring games to be team-based vs individual-based. Teaches the importance of their role and effectively contributing to the success of something bigger than yourself. From experience, games structured to be individual-based will produce outcomes where the **same players** are always competing to win. The players eliminated are left to watch, while these are the players that probably need extra reps. Lastly, games can be created from any drill or skill just need to be creative and introduce competition. The objective is to make it fun, while communicating there is a lesson in each competition/game to be learned. Below are some examples.

Games

1. Arizona St

Complexity: Low

Setup: 2 teams, tee, one coach. One player from each team participates at a time. One player is hitting, the other player starts halfway up the 3rd base line.

Description:

Steps

- a. The batter will hit the ball (off tee or front toss) and run the bases.
- b. The opposing player will chase the ball down as soon as hit.
- c. The objective is for the hitter to reach as many bases as possible before the opposing player reaches the ball. Receive a point for each base reached, most points win.

Variations: Could require the players to hit to specific locations. Could require the “chaser” to make a strong throw back into the infield (coach at pitching circle).

2. Beat the Runner

Complexity: Low.

Setup: 2 teams, tee, coaches/parents to fill in where necessary. One team in the field playing defense, other team hitting. The defensive team needs a player to cover each base.

Description:

Steps

- a. Offensive player will hit the ball (off tee or front toss) and run all the bases.
- b. The defense team must touch each base before the runner reaches home. The defense doesn't need to touch base in any order.
- c. Offense receives a point for each successful runner.

3. Over/Under Relay

Complexity: Medium.

Setup: 2 teams, 2 bats, helmets. Two single file lines on the first base line (between home and 1st). Suggest wearing helmets as safety precaution. Place a bat in front of each line. Two coaches positioned straight across from each line, between 2nd and 3rd base.

Description:

Steps

- a. First player in each line will run to their coach and give “high five”
- b. The player will run back to the line.
- c. As the player is running back, the next player in line will pick up the bat.
- d. “Over”: Once the player returns, the two players will lift the bat, raise over their heads and pass thru the rest of the line. The players in line should duck a little to avoid not getting hit as the bat passes them.
- e. “Under”: After reach the end of line, 2 players lower the bat and pass thru to the beginning of the line with each girl in line jumping the bat.
- f. The player that assisted the first runner will sprint to the coach and so on.
- g. First team to complete the relay wins.

4. Take a Seat

Complexity: Medium.

Setup: 2 teams, 2 buckets, 6 cones. Throwing relay game. Form two lines, place 3 balls on cones about 5-10 feet away and place a bucket a longer distance (e.g. 30 – 40 feet) in front of each line.

Description:

Steps

- a. One player (“catcher”) from each team starts on the bucket.
- b. First player (“thrower”) in line sprints to the cone, retrieves the ball and sprints back to the front of the line.
- c. Thrower will throw the ball to the catcher. Catcher cannot lose contact to the bucket. If successful catch, the catcher can drop the ball by her side. If bad throw, the catcher must wait to retrieve after all 3 balls have been thrown.
- d. The thrower will perform the same steps for the final 2 balls.
- e. Once the thrower is complete, the catcher must place all 3 balls including any bad throws back to the cones. Catcher goes to the end of the line.
- f. The thrower becomes the catcher and so on.
- g. First team to complete the relay wins.

5. Target Throwing

Complexity: Low.

Setup: 2 buckets, ball for each player. Place object on top of bucket or two at home plate. Object could be an old helmet or stuffed animal (make it fun).

Description:

Steps

- a. Players form a half circle behind the pitching circle.
- b. Each player takes a turn knocking object off the bucket
- c. Winner gets a prize or losers have a consequence.

6. Knock-out Game - Fielding

Complexity: Low

Setup: Players form a line a SS.

Description: Fielding game

Steps:

- a. Coach hits a ball to the first player in line, if they field cleanly and make accurate throw to first they continue. Coach decides if “out”.
- b. Last player standing wins.
- c. If creating an individual game recommend for those that get “knocked-out” another coach gives the more reps so not standing around do nothing.

Variation: Create a team game. Divide into teams. Each player gets 2-3 balls, count the number of successful plays.

7. Knock-out Game - Hitting

Complexity: Low

Setup: Coach front toss pitching,

Description: Fielding game

Steps:

- a. Hitter receives one pitch.
- b. If bad pitch and you watch or if good pitch and you hit well, then you survive; otherwise you are out.

Variation: Create a team game. Divide into teams. Whichever team has the most “survivors” they win.

8. Home Run Derby

Complexity: Low

Setup: 2 teams, one tee

Description: Hitting game

Steps:

- a. Hitter receives soft toss or hits off tee. If the ball reaches the outfield in the air, home run. Otherwise out. Could allow the other team to “rob” homeruns if they catch the ball.

Variation: Could allow the other team to “rob” homeruns if they catch the ball.

9. 3 Ball Put-Outs Before Runner Crosses Home

Complexity: Medium

Setup: 2 teams, 3 balls, 3 cones.

Description: Fielding Game at SS. Work on rounding the ball on slow rollers

Steps:

- a. One team starting on 2nd base. Second team participant inside the baseline at normal SS position.
- b. Setup cones such that from a starting position the SS needs to round the ball.
- c. SS fields the ball and throws to first. Same thing for the other 2 balls.
- d. If SS completes all 3 throws successfully before runner crosses home, then rewarded a point.

10. Target Bunting

Complexity: Low

Setup: 2 teams, 3 balls per player, cones

Description: Bunting game

Steps:

- a. Create 3 zones to place the bunt.
- b. First zone in front of the plate is 1 point and so on.
- c. Foul ball or ball past the last zone is worth 0 points. Most points win

11. PIG

Complexity: Low

Setup: One tee

Description: Hitting game

Steps:

- a. First hitter hits the ball (tee or soft-toss),
- b. Next batter must hit the ball in the same relative location otherwise get a letter.

12. Numbered Line

Complexity: Medium

Setup: 2 cones. Divide players into 2 lines. One coach hitting and one coach catching per team

Description: Fielding game.

Steps:

- a. Coaches stand about 15ft in front of the first player in their line.
- b. Players are numbered, first player is 1 and so on.
- c. Coach calls out a number
- d. If number called out do not move, coach will hit a grounder to you, field the ball and throw to catcher.
- e. If number is not called sprint to a cone about 5 ft away. Both steps (d) and (e) occur simultaneously.

Variations: If number is called sprint to cone and field a forehand or backhand. If number is not called stay still. Could rotate the players so they need to concentrate on another number.

13. Target Hitting

Complexity: Low

Setup: 2 teams, 2 cones or 2 balls

Description: Hitting game

Steps:

- a. Place cones at different spots in the infield/outfield and hitter must hit the ball between them.

14. Long Ball

Complexity: Low

Setup: 2 teams, one tee

Description: Hitting game

Steps:

- a. Each player gets 2 attempts off tee to see how far they can hit the ball.
- b. The team with the furthest ball from home plate wins.

15. Long-Short-Long-Short

Complexity: Low

Setup: Pair up players, 4 cones

Description: Throwing relay game. Place 2 cones to designate "long" distance. Place 2 cones to designate "short" distance.

Steps:

- a. Each pair throws 3 successful (up & down is 1) throws from "long" distance
- b. Once successful, pair throws 3 successful from "short" distance.
- c. Once successful, repeat steps (a) and (b) again.
- d. First pair to complete wins.

16. Catch Up / Base Running Game

Complexity: Low

Setup: 2 teams of similar running speed, 4 cones if inside.

Description: conditioning / base running skills

Steps:

- a. One team will start at home and one team will start at second base
- b. The teams begin to run at the same time and will run once around the bases and return to starting point
- c. Next runner in line will set up on base and begin to run when player ahead of them tags their hand.
- d. New base runner cannot leave base until their hand has been tagged

Variations: Runners with gloves and ball. Run 3 bases and throw to the next runner. Could make it fun by making them do alternate running, skipping, shuffling, running backwards, etc.

17. Relays (General)

Complexity: Low

Setup: 2 teams

Description: Most throwing/baserunning drills can be structured as a game, be creative.

18. "X" in "Y" minutes

Complexity: Medium

Setup: 1 or 2 teams

Description: Team need to execute a skill "x" times in "y" minutes, be creative.

19. "X" in a Row Before Move On

Complexity: Medium

Setup: 1 or 2 teams

Description: Team need to execute a skill "x" times before can move on to next drill, be creative.

20. Outfield Relay Game

Complexity: Medium

Setup: 2 teams, practice net is set up a home plate.

Description: tracking fly balls / cut off relay work / throwing accuracy / relay speed

Steps:

- a. One team will be set up in left field and one team set up in right field
- b. Each team will break up into two groups, one deep fielder group and one fielder set on the edge of the grass line but not on the infield gravel
- c. Players will come out into position one at a time and then rotate within their team
One coach will stand at about third base with a bucket of balls and hit deep fly balls to left field
- d. One coach will stand at about first base with a bucket of balls and hit deep fly balls to right field
- e. Coaches will take turns hitting balls to their side
- f. The deep fielder from each team will field ball then relay to team mate playing on edge of grass line and this player will throw the ball home try to hit the practice net or get the throw into the pocket of the practice net
- g. Players will get one point if they hit the practice net and 3 points if they can get their throw into the net pocket
- h. If the fly ball is dropped or the cut off throw is dropped or uncatchable then no points can be earned

21. 3 Ball

Complexity: Medium

Setup: 3 teams of 3 or 4, coach pitching at shorter distance with net. Coaches/Parents might need to fill-in defensively.

Description: Simulate a game, fast paced.

Steps:

- a. One team hitting, the rest of the team in the field.
- b. Hitting team gets 3 outs, balls in play are live just like a game. No stealing.
- c. Outfield goes to infield, infield hits and hitting team goes to outfield.
- d. Keep track of runs scored.

Team Bonding

1. Circle of Truth

Players will sit in a circle after practice or game and each will take turn saying something nice about another player. This can be a good play they made / something nice they did for another player / an example of leadership.

2. Game Day Traditions

Something to prepare the team and bring them together to play a game. Maybe they all wear a game day bracelet = this could be a simple rubber one or something they make as a team. Having all their shoe laces match and have them sit down and put the new laces in their shoes together.

3. Battle Buddy

Assign all the players a battle buddy, their job to encourage and support their battle buddy during team practices and games.

4. Player/ Play of the Game, Practice Player of the Day

Have the players keep track of each other's great plays and great games / practices. Record on a white board or clip board in dugout. Coaches and players reward and celebrate chosen player. Could pass something along from one game to the next / players could take home with them / could be simple like a new ball signed by all team members.

5. Player Development

Keep track of positives and areas for improvement. This could be done on a white board or a clip board in dugout. Review with players at the end of the game or at next practice.

6. Hitting Awards

This can be done many ways = stickers for their helmet.