



# **CARVER COMMUNITY YOUTH BASEBALL/SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION**

## **COACHES MANUAL**

**SKILLS, DRILLS, TIPS TO HELP COACH YOUR TEAM**

# First Meeting Agenda

Your first meeting with the players' and their parents can be at your first practice, at a specially designated parents' meeting or as some sort of event held by your association. Below is a typical agenda of such a meeting and some recommendations for your success.

- **Introductions.** First of all, have a 'get to know you' activity. You will need to know the new players names and be able to recognize them, and it is helpful if you know the parents name as well. Gather all the parents and players together, with the players in front of the parents nearest you. Call on a player and have him tell you his/her name LOUDLY, so all the players can hear. Then have all the players shout "HI JOE" at the top of their lungs. Then ask Joe to introduce his parents to you and the other parents and players. This can be a lot of fun especially with younger players. "
- **Coaches Rules.** Give the players some ground rules about practice. Tell them where you will have Team Talks, rules about being at practice (be sure the parents can hear), when you will take breaks, what to bring and to wear to practice and how they should behave. After this, let the kids go to some other activity, as the remainder deals with just the parents.
- **Electronic Tool.** Suggest to parents to download the SportsEngine app which the parents may find a team roster, the season schedule which may include the teams practices, games, "Snack" assignments, photo day, holidays, etc. The schedule should include the location of the field and time for both games and practices. The SportsEngine app also allows the team to send Text Messages (within the app) to the entire team members using the "Chat" function. Suggest to parents to "Turn on Notifications" through their device and the SportsEngine app, to receive the proper notification when any changes to the team schedule, communications, etc occur.
- **League Play Rules.** If your team is included in League play and has rules to follow, you may suggest to parents to visit the associations website to obtain a copy of the league rules so parent may be familiar with the rules.

# **Baseball/Softball**

## **Tips & Drills**

### **EARLY BIRD GETS THE SWINGS**

As the season starts, we want to get off to a good start with our team and what is expected of them. Of course, youth baseball is unlike a school team sport and you cannot force a player to practice or even force them to be on time. However, there are certain things you can do as a coach to ensure your team develops good habits. My own personal pet peeve was having the players arrive late for practices. My practices usually run no longer than one hour and if a player is fifteen minutes late, he misses a full quarter of a practice. I have tried a number of different tactics.

The first one is, I give each player a number as they arrive at practice and they keep that number throughout the practice. Whoever arrives first is number one and when it comes to batting practice he or she goes first. The players remember this and after a couple of practices, you will notice the difference with players arriving early to get a good number.

Another technique I use is to start practice with a mini batting practice even before warm ups. After you do this a few times, you'll notice the players arriving early and telling you that they go first. Do not do this technique every practice but every once in a while.

Practices, especially early in the season, will set the tone for a successful and fun season. The kids take notice when the coach arrives early and organized. Use these two techniques to get your players to arrive on time.

**Drill:**

Round the Horn

**Purpose:**

This drill simulates throwing down runners, double plays, fielding grounders. Kids really enjoy it.

**Equipment:**

Infield area with bases and balls.

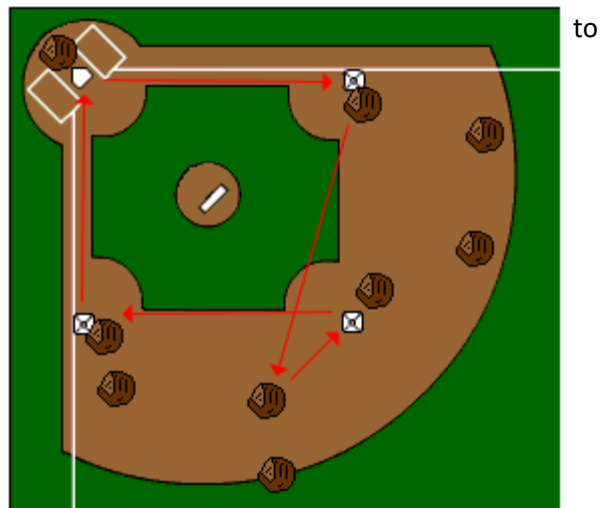
**Setup:**

All infield positions are used except for the pitcher. You can use this drill with 5 or rotate more players in.

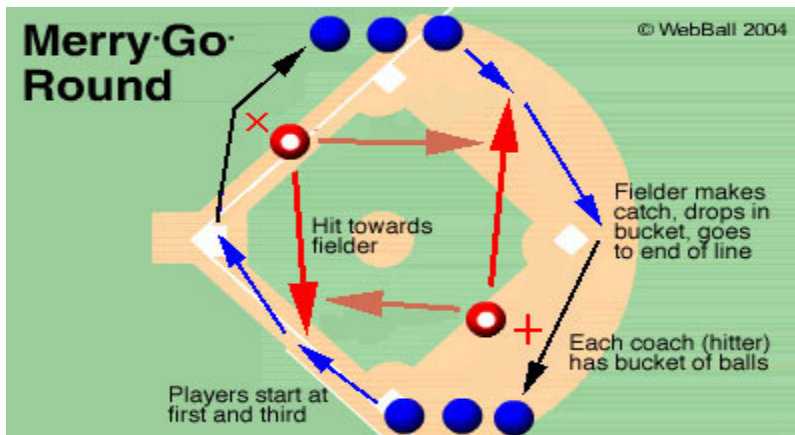
**Execution:**

- 5 players - all infield except for pitcher. (can rotate more in if you want, but only 5 active each time around).
- everyone plays their position
- ball starts with the catcher and throws to 3rd to simulate a steal throwdown
- 3rd throws a grounder to 2nd who fields the ball and flips it to the SS covering 2nd
- the SS throws to 1st
- the 1st baseman throws to catcher
- after 2 successful rounds (or whenever), players rotate. Keep rotating until all players have played all positions

You can make this deal into a team competition by keeping track of errors and who made them. Players try finish drill with no errors.



## Infield Drill



Easy for even young kids to do, yet it can help refine the skills of older players (just increase the station-to-station distance). It can be done around the infield, outfield, or any other sports field, or even in a gym (during pre-season or wet weather).

**RED** lines are direction of ball throws or simulated hits.

**BLUE** and **BLACK** lines are direction of player movement.

### Set Up

Takes two lines of players, two coaches (or assistants) and two buckets of balls.

- Coaches are positioned on opposite sides of the 'merry-go-round'. each with a bucket of balls.
- Players form two lines to move into fielding position.
- Each player takes a turn fielding a grounder, roller or pop-up.
- After each catch, the player circles round, drops his fielded ball in a bucket and joins the end of the opposite line.

### Run the Drill

During the drill stress the mechanics.

- Grounders - stress the importance of getting square to the ball. Step forward, butt down, knees bent, arms out front, look ball into glove, cover with bare hand, soft upper body, bring ball to stomach, move into throwing position.
- Flys and Pops - stress early movement to ball, proper fielding angle, feet underneath, glove side catch, move through into throwing position.

**Drill:**

Covering First

**Purpose:**

This drill helps your first baseman work on covering first base and the footwork required to receive the throw.

**Equipment:**

Baseballs

**Setup:**

Have first basemen in a line at their position.

**Execution:**

Coach will stand midway between first and second.

First player in line will run to first and get in position to receive the catch. Coach will deliver a throw trying to alternate the location of the throw so players can work on footwork in all directions.

Once a player has caught the ball he will throw it back to the coach and go to the end of the line.

As players go through the line, coach should move to simulate throws coming from other positions.

**Drill:**

Double Cutoff

**Purpose:**

This is a team drill to work on double cut relays from the outfield

**Equipment:**

Helmets for runners; baseballs

**Setup:**

Have a full defensive team on the field (minus pitchers). Use any extra players to run the bases.

**Execution:**

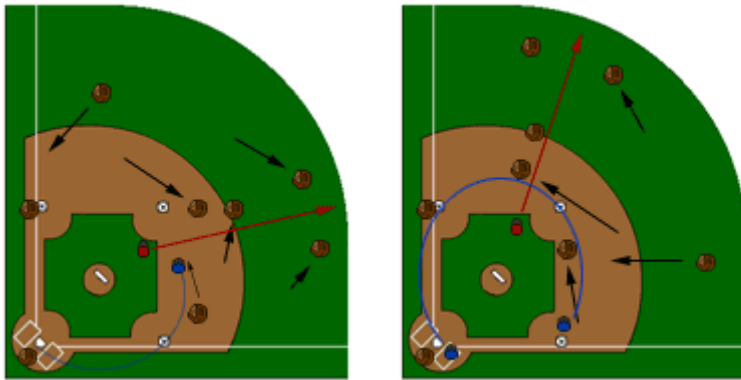
Hit the balls from the infield grass to make sure you are getting them in the proper gaps. Work on double cut relay from all positions in the outfield with no runners (throw to 3rd) and a runner on 1st (throw to home).

Have each group make a play from both lines and each gap before rotating.

Rotate players from outfield to infield to running. Rotation will differ depending on the number of players on the team.

This drill is also a good conditioning drill as players are continually running.

Below are a few images of how I run my double cutoff situations on balls hit to the gaps and down the lines.



**Drill:**

Executing and Defending the Bunt

**Purpose:**

Incorporate a daily drill sequence that focused on executing and defending the bunt.

**Equipment:**

4 buckets, 2 cones, and baseballs

**Setup:**

Infield take their positions with the exception of the pitcher (drill can also be ran with a pitcher). The coach sets up two orange cones, separating the bunting zones into three sections: right side, middle, and left side. The coach, on a knee, has a bucket of balls about 50 ft. from the plate lined up in the middle section. The cones give the hitter two specific areas their bunts must reach: either the left or right side. Also, an empty bucket needs to be placed at all three bases. These buckets allow infielders to easily deposit fielded balls, insuring constant repetition to players.

**Execution:***Stage 1 (3 minutes):*

The coach, with the bucket, pitches the ball toward the catcher. The bunter at the plate must push the ball toward either line or hustle down the line toward 1st base. The 1st and 3rd basemen charge the bunt and throw it to the 2nd baseman covering the bag at 1st. The fielders must play the ball out, even if it is not fielded cleanly. A heavy emphasis should be placed on communication between 1st and 2nd baseman. Make sure all the infielders get back to normal depth before the next pitch is delivered.

*Stage 2 (3 minutes):*

The hitter, in Stage Two, is working on pushing the ball to the left side. This drill focuses on the 3rd baseman attempting to force the runner at 2nd base.

*Stage 3 (3 minutes):*

In Stage Three, hitters are focusing on placing the bunt on the right side. While fielding during Stage Three, 1st basemen charge the pitch and look to get the force or tag out at 3rd base. The coach will stimulate the situation before the pitch. If the ball is not fielded cleanly, the 1st baseman must throw to the 2nd basemen cover the bag at 1st. Furthermore, 3rd basemen must work on getting in front of bad throws in the dirt or off the base and work on swiping the tag in front of the bag.

*Stage 4 (3 minutes):*

In Stage Four, half the position players bunting split up and practice running from 3rd base. The coach, moves to the mound, comes to the set position. During the stretch, the 3rd baseman must practice holding the runner on at 3rd. The coach either throws over or goes to the plate. During the pitch, the 1st and 3rd basemen charge toward home plate. The bunter's objective is to put the ball on the ground, either to the left or right side. When the bunt is successful, the 1st or 3rd basemen must field it and toss it to the catcher. The catcher must apply the tag to the base runner coming to the plate. If the ball is not fielded cleanly, the 1st or 3rd basemen must attempt to get the out at 1st base. Heavy emphasis should be placed on infielders to quickly transfer the ball from glove to hand. On the squeeze play, fielders have no time to mishandle a transfer and still get the out at home

## Handling Passed Balls

It is certain that no matter how good a catcher is, balls will get past him and roll to the backstop. You can call them *wild pitches* or *passed balls*, but it doesn't make any difference at the time of the play. The important thing is that the catcher knows how to make the play correctly and how to minimize the damage.

There are two different game scenarios for a passed ball situation:

1. A lone runner on first or second
2. A runner on 3rd base

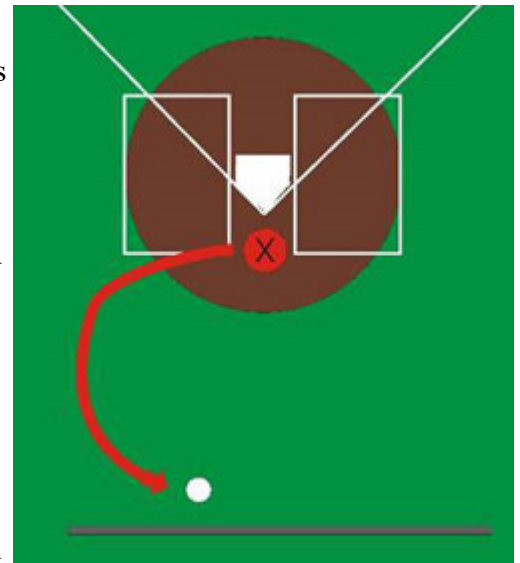
Both use the same technique for going to the ball and discarding the mask. The difference is in what the catcher does as he approaches the ball.

### The Approach

Catchers should always turn to their left as they head back to the ball, as shown in the illustration. This means that the catcher will approach the ball from the right side regardless of where the ball is located.

As soon as the catcher has made his movement left, he should remove his mask and hold onto it until he has located the ball. When the ball is reached the mask should be tossed to the side and towards the backstop, away from the catcher.

Picking up the ball correctly is very important. Failure to do so may result in high throws to a fielder. A catcher should NOT just bend over, grab the ball, and throw it to make a play at second or third base, all in one motion. This often results in a high throw because the catcher bent over and then stood up straight as he was turning back to the field. All of his weight was on his back leg and his release point never moves forward as it should.



### Getting The Ball

As the catcher gets close to the ball (having already discarded his mask), he should drop to his knees and slide to the ball.

The catcher is now in a better position to make a throw to the plate or a base and this technique permits him to attack more aggressively, especially if the ball is up against the backstop. A catcher's shinguards and chest protector will take the impact, if there is one, rather than his body. It also lets the catcher approach the ball without slowing up as he nears the backstop, which save precious seconds.

### A Runner On First or Second Base

Because this situation will seldom result in a play at home, the catcher should concentrate on the lone runner. As he gets to the ball he should rake it into his throwing hand with his glove and NOT grasp it with the glove.

## **Handling Passed Balls – Continued**

The catcher will then pop up into his throwing ready position and quickly determine if there is a play to be made. If so, then the catcher should make his regular throw to second or third base in order to nab the runner.

### **A Runner On Third Base**

As the catcher gets to the ball he should rake it into his throwing hand with his glove and NOT grasp it with the glove.

Instead of popping-up, the catcher remains on his right knee and lifts his left leg up so that his left foot is flat to the ground with his thigh parallel to the ground. The catcher then makes a hard crisp throw to the pitcher's glove. It is important that the catcher throw to the GLOVE even if the pitcher has his glove too high for a good tag.

Too often a catcher will make the hard throw (from 20 feet away) to where the tag should be made and the ball just sails past the pitcher's knees because he cannot react quickly enough to the throw. It is far better to hit a chest high glove and miss the tag than let an errant ball travel through the infield.

Practice between catchers and pitchers with both getting into the proper position (catcher on his right knee and the pitcher down low with his glove 18" off the plate) will greatly reduce errors and increase tags at home on passed balls and wild pitches.

### **Pre-Game Routine**

Catchers should have a pre-game routine, especially on away games. They should practice sliding in a few locations behind the plate and up against the backstop. They should walk along the grass or dirt line along the backstop looking for debris or things like sprinkler heads.

They should search for anything that will interfere with their game play. This also means looking at the bottom of the fence for holes and poorly maintained fencing that may pose a danger to them.

A few moments spent in pre-game assessing the territory (sliding around and examining) will make a big difference during the game.

**Drill:**

Drop Step - Inside Turn

**Purpose:**

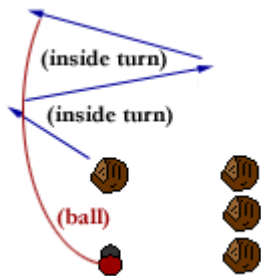
Give outfielders practice at performing a drop step and adjusting to a ball hit at an angle over their heads.

**Equipment:**

Baseballs

**Setup:**

Have outfielder start about 10 feet in front of you. Have a line of outfielder a few feet away.

**Execution:**

With the ball in your hand, point in one direction, player should take a drop step to that side and continue back at an angle. After he has taken a few steps, move the ball to the other side. The player should plant with outside leg and take an inside step to change directions. He should be able to keep his eyes on you the entire time. Change directions one more time, then throw the ball at about the same angle he is heading for him to catch.

To add difficulty make the throw in the opposite direction to force one more inside step.

**Notes:** This drill will help a player adjust to the ball that is hit very high, or has a slice to it, but not way over his head. As with all outfield play make sure your players don't drift to the ball.

**Drill:**

Drop Step - Turn Your Back

**Purpose:**

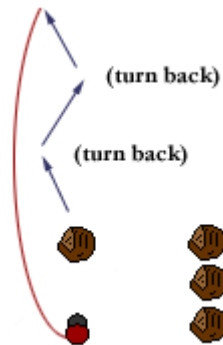
Give outfielders practice at performing a drop step and adjusting to a ball hit deep over their heads.

**Equipment:**

Baseballs

**Setup:**

Have outfielder start about 10 feet in front of you. Have a line of outfielder a few feet away.

**Execution:**

With the ball in your hand, point in one direction, player should take a deep drop step to that side and continue back at a deep angle, but not so deep that he can't look over his shoulder and see you. After he has taken a few steps, move the ball to the other side. The player should turn his head and change his angle to the other direction picking you up as soon as possible. Change directions one more time, then throw the ball over his head for him to catch.

To add difficulty make the throw over the other shoulder to force one more turn.

Notes: On a ball that is hit deep over an outfielder's head, the wind, the slice of the ball, or an incorrect angle can put an outfielder in a position where the ball is going to land over the opposite shoulder of where he is looking. This drill will help an outfielder gain confidence in what is a very difficult catch.

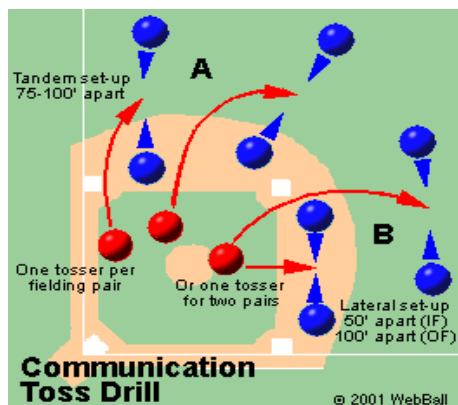
# POP FLY DRILL

*"Mine, Mine, Mine" - Learning to call it.*

## SET-UP

Position fielders in pairs 75-100 feet apart.

Normally the set up is as shown at 'A'. Each fielding pair is in tandem, an infielder with an outfielder - pairing third with left and short with center, plus second with an extra outfielder, and first base with right field. Each team might have their own tosser - a coach or another player, who then rotates.



## CALLING IT

Before beginning, coaches should make one thing clear - what to call. Recommended call these days is not "got it" which might mean "you got it" or "I got it" or "who's got it?". Instead, call "mine - mine - mine!" It's more obvious and more confident. Each tosser underhands the ball up so it will come down midway between the two fielders - one charging in, one turning and sprinting out. (See ['turn and sprint'](#).)

**Important:** The judgement to call 'mine' must be made with confidence and certainty, at which point the other fielder **MUST** tail away into a back-up position - eyes no longer on the ball, concentrating instead on staying about 15' feet from the caller, waiting for the clean catch or dropped ball.

If appropriate for your team, rotate the three players in a group so each gets turns tossing, charging, sprinting back.

## VARIATIONS

- **Laterals:** You can also use the set-up to work on lateral coverage communication between two infielders or two outfielders as shown at 'B'. The rules for calling it and backing it up are the same.
- **Fewer Tossers:** 'B' shows another variation in which only 1 tosser is used for two pairs of players. The one tosser for 2 team set-up can work on the 'A' side also for infield/outfield tandems.
- **More Variations:** Extend this drill for both infield and outfield by adding base coverage, and other variations as explained under [Turn and Sprint](#).

# **T-Ball**

## **Tips & Drills**

# Hitting Drills

## 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.

Make it a fun time and a game to swing without a bat. Make sure the players don't swing too hard, and that they maintain the same fundamentals throughout.

**Result** – With coaches watching over their swing, better instruction can be given to help the players swing properly.

## Invisible Ball

Like the invisible bat drill, this is a drill that puts the bat in the hands for a swing without the ball.

**What you need** – Give the player a bat, helmet and then line them up in front of the tee – without the ball.

**How this drill works** – With the player at the tee, the coach helps them get into the proper batter's stance to make good contact with the ball. The tee should be waist high (or slightly under) and the player needs to focus on the 'imaginary ball'.

The coach will back up, and the player will focus on the spot they are supposed to hit on the imaginary ball. While the other players in the station are waiting, they can pretend they are fielding the ball when the coach says **swing**, and the player takes a swing.

**Result** – Batters might swing too high, or swing too low, but this drill will help them focus on the spot they need to swing to make contact.

## Tee counter

This is a basic batting drill to help a player work on the contact they make with the ball.

**What you need** – A player with a helmet and a bat at the tee. Make sure the tee is at the appropriate height (waist high, or just under). You can set up other stations with a few players at each, with another coach or parent helper.

**How this drill works** – Once the player gets to the tee, they must get into their batter stance. The coach should help them set up properly so they can increase the chance of good contact.

The other players in the station are waiting, gloves in hand, to field the ball. The coach says, 'hit', and the player swings. If the ball is hit the first time, the rest of the team yells 'one'. For each hit, they say the corresponding number. This provides encouragement to the player when they are hitting.

The coach should give each player five swings on the tee. On the final swing (and hit), the player should drop the bat and run to 'first' base.

**Result** – This drill helps players get used to making contact with the ball and using the encouragement of their teammates to help them along the way.

## Coach Says

This will help the players learn the different steps involved in a good swing.

**What you need** – Start off this drill the same as you would start off the drill with the invisible bat. Line up the kids on both the first and third baselines.

**How this drill works** – This is a batter's version of 'Simon Says' where the players must do what you say in order to demonstrate their understanding of a skill.

You will focus on three key areas: grip, stance and swing. When you say any one of those three words, the player must show you their best grip, stance or swing (after instruction, of course). As the coach, you can watch, and go to individual players to help them with different aspects of their swing.

**Result** – You will be able to help the players with each step of their swing, and sometimes that is more helpful than seeing the entire swing all at once.

# Throwing & Fielding Drills

## Show the Ball

Learning how to properly hold the ball is the first step to throwing it well.

**What you need** – Each player needs to have a ball and a glove in order to work in this drill.

**How this drill works** – Gripping the baseball is essential to throwing properly and accurately. At a young age, learning the proper grip is the best way to help them build the foundation for throwing.

Each player has the ball, and they must grasp the ball with the thumb on the underside, and the two top fingers spread slightly apart over the top. The ring finger and the pinky should be touching the side of the ball slightly on the outside.

When the coach says 'show me', each of the players gets into the proper throwing stance: legs apart (one in front of the other), foot on the throwing side is behind the body, and the arm is up, with the elbow raised to shoulder height and the forearm and bicep at a 90 degree angle (L-shape).

**Result** – Coaches will be able to watch how their players are gripping the ball as they show them the grip and the throwing stance. Problems can be corrected at this point.

## One Knee Throwing

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

**What you need** – Each player needs to have a ball to perform this drill. To start, you may want to give the players a softer ball, like a tennis ball.

**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.

**Result** – This drill helps the player learn to upper body action for throwing, along with building throwing strength and accuracy.

## Soft fly ball

Sometimes younger baseball players have a fear of catching the ball because they are afraid it is too hard.

**What you need** – You will need enough softer balls (tennis balls, wiffle balls, puffy balls) for all of the players. The player should have their gloves.

**How this drill works** – It is tough for some young players to get over the fact that the ball is very hard and they may get hit. This prevents some players from making the effort to catch the ball. They are afraid that if they miss, the ball is going to hit, and therefore hurt them.

Start off by showing the players that the ball is very soft, and even if it hits them in the head, they are not going to get hurt. Then, you can start off with the players in the lines and throw the ball to them one by one. Once the players get the hang of it, they can start throwing the ball to each other to try and catch it.

**Result** – Younger players will get over the fear of catching the ball by working with the soft ball and eventually moving up to the harder ball.

## Catch contest

This is a game that pits the throwing and catching skills of the players against one another. It should be a fun game for all of the kids to participate in.

**What you need** – Pair up the players on the team and give each pair a ball. Each should also have their gloves.

**How this drill works** – Once you have the players paired up, start them off a short distance apart from one another – probably between 8 and 10 feet. The players should throw the ball back and forth executing overhand throws and catches.

The players need to make good throws and good catches, as each time they miss or drop the ball, the pair has to stop in the game. The game ends when the last pair to keep throwing and catching the ball without dropping it is still in the game.

If the game lasts longer (with improved play), you can move the pairs back a step or two.

**Result** – The players will gradually build their throwing and catching skills and learn to work with the other players on their team in this manner.

## **Block the Ball**

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

**What you need** – 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. For each ball that the player knocks down they get three points. If the player scoops the ball with their glove, they get five points.

The players will get excited about getting points for knocking the ball down.

To teach players how to use their gloves properly, try using plastic milk jugs with one side cut out to form a “scoop”. Have the kids use the scoop to field the ball. This will help them learn to use their gloves to scoop up the ball, rather than trap it.

**Result** – Learning to knock the ball down and ultimately to try and scoop the ball is the first part of fielding the ball.

## **Field and Bounce to the Bucket**

This puts together the basic idea of fielding a grounder and then throwing the ball to a spot on the field.

**What you need** – You can set up several stations for this drill in order to increase the amount of repetition. You have a line of fielders and a box or bucket at a base.

**How this drill works** – This puts the original drill of bouncing to the bucket together with fielding the ball. The coach will roll a grounder to the player and they pick it up and throw it to try to get it in the box.

The emphasis is for the player to knock down the ball, gain the proper grip, throwing motion and then aim it to the bucket. Players will get the same points as they would get in the bounce to the bucket drill.

Adding the extra element of fielding the ball may be difficult for some players, but it is an essential skill to master at this level.

**Result** – This is a step above the basic skill of throwing to a target, by adding the fielding aspect to this drill.

## Count the catches

This is a good drill to help players strive toward making good catches, and also a drill they can work on at home.

**What you need** – You can either do this as a group drill, or you can make it a drill that has players paired up with each other.

**How this drill works** – if you do this as a group, you can get two stations going in order to compete against each other, and have a coach or parent volunteer at each station. With a group, the coach will underhand toss the ball to the player in the line and they must make the catch. Everyone yells out, “one!” Then, another toss and “two!” And so on.

Each side goes on until a player in the line drops the ball. Then they start at one again. You can run this drill in pairs, with the players trying to catch the ball between each other.

**Result** – This drill simply reinforces the skill of catching the ball.

## One and Two

Award points to the players for throwing and catching the ball at shoulder level or above.

**What you need** – Pair up the players and give them each a ball. (You can get a softer ball to start).

**How this drill works** – This drill helps players to understand the importance of accurate throws and catches that are at the shoulder level. It makes it easier for kids to throw and catch if they have something to aim for. It makes it especially better if it becomes a game and there are points at stake.

If the pair throws and catches at shoulder height, then they get two points. If they throw the ball and then catch it at waist level, then they get one point. If it is lower than the waist they get no points.

This will help the players learn to keep the ball up where their teammates can catch it much easier.

**Result** – More accurate throws and players can compete against each other in a game-like setting.

# “Game” Play Drills

## Base Runners

Players need to learn to listen to what their coaches say when they are running the bases.

**What you need** – You can have the tee set up, with a batter at the tee, but without a bat. The coach will be at first base.

**How this drill works** – The player will take an imaginary swing with the imaginary bat and then run as fast as they can to first base. As the runner approaches the base he or she will call out to the runner to either stay at the base, or to keep running.

Run each player through the drill differing each time what you are going to say to the player. They will begin to learn through the repetition to listen for their coaches voice when they are running the bases.

**Result** – Knowing the coach is going to help them will give some players confidence on the base pads. For others it is a lesson in listening to what the coach says on the field.

## Fast Fingers Drill

Charging the ball to get to it quickly is a great skill to learn in baseball.

**What you need** – Line the players up in four single file lines along the first or third baseline. The coach will stand out in front of them about 15 or 20 feet away.

**How this drill works** – All of the players will be in their lines and the coach will be in front of them. The coach will point to one of the lines and then roll or hit the ball to them with a slow grounder.

The player needs to run up to pick up the ball and then settle themselves down to throw back to the coach. The object for the kids is going to be to pick up the ball, remember their proper throwing action and make a nice throw back to the coach.

Once the coach tosses the ball, he or she counts out 1001, 1002, 1003... and then stops when the ball gets back to the coach. The object of the game is to have the players get the ball back to the coach as quickly and accurately as possible. The quickest pick up and throw is the fastest fingers player.

**Result** – The players will learn to get the ball to the coach quicker by charging it, picking it up, and then making a good throw.

## **First base drill**

This is the most basic play in baseball and should be taught early

**What you need** – You can start with the players just in a couple of single file lines in the infield, or you can put them at positions. You may want to start them in lines and have them closer to first base to build confidence. Have a coach or parent at first base to start.

**How this drill works** – This is a basic fielding drill for beginning players. The coach will softly hit or roll grounders to the players and they need to scoop the ball, set, and then make an accurate throw to the coach.

Coaches should focus on making sure the player gains good control of the ball, faces their target and then goes through a good throwing motion to get the ball to the coach or parent on first base.

You can make the drill more challenging by putting players at the infield positions.

**Result** – The players will learn the fundamentals of making an out.

## **Coach run around (then players)**

This is a base identification drill, and the coach gets a little exercise

**What you need** – Make sure all of the bases are intact and in their proper positions. The kids can watch from the middle of the diamond.

**How this drill works** – At first, get all of the kids attention and go over which bases are which on the field. Then, the coach will stand at home plate in front of the tee and take an imaginary swing at an imaginary ball and then go towards first base. Tell them to yell out which base you are heading to each time.

Once you get to first base, they yell 'first'. Once you round the bag and get to second, they yell 'second'. Etcetera.

After you do this a couple of times, then you can run each player through the bases and have them yell out which base they are on, along with all of the other kids.

**Result** – Base identification is important to learn at an early age. It is the fundamental for baserunning and should be something you work on regularly.

## Tag out Frozen Tag

This helps players to learn the importance of tagging with the ball, and also promotes a whole lot of fun.

**What you need** – Mark off an area about 20 yards by 20 yards. The T-ball infield might work if you don't have too many players. Two players will need to have their gloves and a ball inside the glove.

**How this drill works** – This is a tag game that actually requires the taggers to tag the other players with the ball inside the glove. The two players that are 'it' will chase other players and they will have to tag those players with their gloves.

If the ball comes out of the glove, then the player tagged is NOT frozen. If they don't tag with the ball, then the player is NOT frozen. Players that are tagged must be frozen and they need to get unfrozen by their teammates by going underneath their legs or their arms.

**Result** – Players will quickly learn the importance of tagging others with the ball in their glove, and maintaining control of the ball when doing it.

## Go to your Base

Players need to learn to go to their base when another runner is on base.

**What you need** – You can run this as a two base drill to start, and then run it with three bases, and then all of the bases. Have a player playing second base and first base, with a runner on first base to start. You can have a fielder to shag the grounders.

**How this drill works** – This drill may take some time for fielders to understand, but it is important to advance the development of the fielding player. With a first and second baseman playing their position, and a runner on first, the coach must teach a player to recognize that they need to go to their bag and wait for a throw to put the runner out.

Help the fielder to understand by telling them they need to protect their base if they see another runner coming after it. They protect the base by catching the ball if it is thrown there.

**Result** – In time, fielders will understand they have to cover their base when there are runners.

## **Next base drill**

Once a player is on first base, they may not always know where they need to go next.

**What you need** – You can set up a couple of stations if you have enough bases. Set up a diamond with the bases as they would normally be set up. Start with a player on first base and a lineup of batters.

**How this drill works** – This drill starts with a player on first base and one at the tee to bat. Instead of having a real ball, players will 'show' coach their great swing and then run to first.

You will also have to explain to the kids on first base, where they need to go next. Another coach, or a parent volunteer can be on second to help direct the players where to go next. Keep going so each player has a chance to bat and run around the bases.

Coaches should watch that the runner understands which base he or she is headed to, and also that they stop right on the base.

**Result** – This is a basic baserunning drill that helps kids learn where to go during the game.

## **Catch the players**

Speedy baserunning is the key to this fun drill for the kids and lots of work for the coaches!

**What you need** – You can either set up a couple of stations with four bases, or have coaches and parent volunteers alternate. Groups of four runners at a time will go.

**How this drill works** – The coach will start the four runners, one at a time. Give each runner a five second head start and then send the next runner. After all four runners, then the coach heads around the base pads.

The object is for each player to catch the players ahead of them while they are running around the bases. Once it gets to the coach, then the coach needs to run fast to catch the players that are left. If any of the players run off the baseline, or if they go to the wrong base, they will be out of the game.

**Result** – This will probably be one of the most fun games you and the kids are playing. It teaches them they need to run around the bases as fast as they can, or coach will catch them. It translates well to a game situation.

## **THREE HELPFUL COACHING HINTS**

### **MAKE A PRACTICE SCHEDULE**

Always make out a daily practice schedule. Properly label each practice session, drill, task or play that you cover.

Make sure to post this schedule before practice and that each of your assistant coaches have a copy. Stick to it: Organization is a sign of discipline and also emphasizes the value of practice time. Players pick up on this very quickly.

### **KEEP RECORDS**

Important in long-term practice scheduling. Keep your practice schedules in a folder, in order. You can then go back to see when you last covered a task or practiced a skill or play. This record keeping also makes it easier to make out future practice schedules.

### **UMPIRE NAME CALLING**

If your program/league has umpires during games, it is important to build a good rapport with the umpire or umpires working your game. Calling them "blue" often does not help in this endeavor. I suggest that you address them by their names. I am not good at remembering names so I always write their name in my left palm. I will always address them by their first name when I ask a question or have conversation between innings.

- Learn the game - *practice matters*
- Hustle - *how you practice is how you play*
  - Be competitive - *play to win*
- Respect and support each other - *the golden rule*
- Respect yourself - *no foul language or personal remarks*
- Play with poise - *the game DOES start over with every pitch*
  - Enjoy the game - *and have fun being a part of it*
  - Take pride in what you do - *never be content with mediocrity*
- Baseball, Softball, and T-Ball is a team sport but demands individual effort