

[Practice Plans](#)

From Mark Linden of Baseball Positive

Coaching youth baseball & youth softball: practice templates and drills

Included in this section are practice plans and templates for the first nineteen (19) practices of the year. These are organized so that each successive practice builds off the previous. A list with the sequence for introducing each skill and concept precedes the practice plans. A notation is made next to each telling which practice plan(s) the skill or concept is scheduled. Each activity in the practice plans is linked to a diagram or explanation of how the activity is run.

At the end of the section are three 90-minute and three two-hour, mid-season, practice plans and templates. These illustrate the timing and structure of a practice after all foundational skills and concepts are in place.

The content of practices from mid-season on will vary from team to team depending on which aspects of the game a coach feels their team needs work. These are designed generically for all 'Player Pitch' levels of baseball and softball.

All teams will progress through the content at different speeds. It should not be a concern if your team requires a few extra practices to cover the content, On the other hand some teams can get through the content quicker, especially teams of 11-12 year olds. Note: while some of the content may seem elementary to a veteran coach it is important to make sure the kids are competent in each piece of content before moving on to more advanced activities.

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Mini Diamond – Super Tool

One of the most valuable tools a coach can use is the Mini Diamond. Any drill in which the focus of the teaching is something other than working on full on overhand throwing technique can be run on a Mini Diamond. Use of the Mini Diamond is referenced throughout the Coaching Guide.

A Mini Diamond is 20'-25' square, but can be modified larger or smaller depending on the activity. It is constructed using cones, throw down bases, ball caps, extra shirts that are laying around, a leaf, anything. Anytime we compact the teaching/learning environment we reduce distractions, improve communication and the players get many more repetitions during a drill.

Examples of drills that can be run using a Mini Diamond include relays, backing-up and base coverage responsibilities, and first and third defense. Keep in mind that for most activities the throwing and catching aspect is the last skill that needs to be mastered (and we take care of that during 'Playing Catch Practice'). Proper movement, positioning and communication need to be understood and mastered to some extent before we add the throwing aspect to cement the execution of the activity.

The Mini Diamond is also useful for teaching how a drill is supposed to run before going to the full size diamond.

Standard Practice Template

- I. Wiffle Ball Batting (pre-practice)
- II. Skill Building Warm-up
- III. Playing Catch Practice
- IV Team Skills and Drills
- V. Batting Practice: A 12-Player Drill
- VI. Scrimmage

Descriptions of Each Segment of the Practice Template

The practice templates in the Coaching Guide are based on the standard structure of a college baseball practice template; modified for the 12U environment.

At the college level teams have limits to how much time they can spend on the field each week. Their practices are designed to maximize each minute the players are 'on the clock'. The primary concern in the 12U environment is keeping the kids active and engaged throughout each practice. If we leave them standing and lose their attention and it is a challenge to re-engage them. Also, constant standing around (not having fun) is the primary reason kids leave the game.

I. Whiffle Ball Batting (Pre-Practice)

It is strongly recommended that kids who are early arrivals not play catch on their own. Don't put balls out prior to the start of practice.

The skills of throwing and receiving throw are the foundation of the game. The kids should always be supervised when executing these critical skills. Instead of allowing our kids to play catch when they arrive, set up a whiffle ball batting practice (the best type of ball to use is a 'pickle ball')

One coach can throw to two kids at once, two coaches can throw to four kids, and so on. A coach who has gained proficiency at pitching in this environment can pitch to three kids at once. (additional info, and a diagram, for Whiffle Ball Batting can be found on the COACHING GUIDE page under 'Teaching Points')

Have half the kids batting and half chasing balls (they love this!). Give each player 8 swings then switch. Note: No 'one mores'; doing this can eat up a lot of valuable time. If a player swings and misses on their eighth swing we tell them, "Good work. Switch to chasing balls." Suggestion: tell the batter when they have two or three more swings.

SAFETY:

Make it crystal clear to the kids that running through, the pitching/swinging lanes of the activity is absolutely against the rules. They have to go around the outside. This is not as easy as simply telling them. It will take some time, and disciplinary action, to train them that there are no exceptions to this rule.

Make it a rule that there is to be no swinging of a bat except when at the 'plate' and when a coach is pitching. Kids will want to pick up balls and try to hit them back to the coaches when picking up balls during or at the end of the drill. Be ready to squash this activity the moment it starts. Make it clear this will not be tolerated in any circumstance.

The origination of Whiffle Ball Batting was to give the players something to do between their arrival at the ballpark and the official start of practice, so to not play catch unsupervised. However, since this is such a fun activity and is only available prior to the start of practice, it becomes an incentive for kids to arrive early. Ultimately this leads to practices starting on time with all or most kids ready to go.

II. Skill Building Warm-up

There are many activities that can warm up our players' bodies, which at the same time develop baseball skills. Instead of running the kids across the park and back, take them through a series of activities that develop baseball skills. Many of the suggested activities for this part of practice rarely make it into a practice routine for many teams. Many of the more common skill building activities that make the core of many practices, once learned by the players (and coaches), can be inserted into the Skill Building Warm-up portion of practice. This frees up more time to work on Team Play activities in the core part of a practice.

III. Playing Catch Practice

The most important part of a practice is the Playing Catch Practice segment, traditionally referred to as 'Warming Up'. Unfortunately this has evolved into a lazy and sloppy activity. The ten minutes our

kids spend playing catch should be the most focused, most intense and most disciplined part of the practice.

This is the time when we as coaches have to be at our best, making sure each player is using proper catching and throwing technique. When the team is playing catch there needs to be an adult or two (coaches and/or parent helpers) standing behind each group of kids with extra balls in hand ready to resupply kids when balls get past them.

One of the biggest time wasters in baseball practices is kids chasing after balls. We want every possible moment of practice to involve skill building activities. When thrown balls are missed by the receiving player an adult standing behind the row of players flips a new ball to the player that missed, so that player gets right back in to working on their skills

Playing Catch Practice has three parts:

The first few minutes of this routine the kids throw from approximately 35' and work on pitching mechanics.

The next few minutes throw from approximately 60' emphasizing the proper stance prior to receiving a throw, footwork in preparation to receive a throw and proper receiving position.

Skill Activity

(Proper technique for pitching, throwing, receiving throws and the additional drills that make up this part of practice will be added to the Coaching Guide in soon.)

IV. Team Skills & Drills

Examples of activities include:

- Skill Station Rotation
- Cuts-Relays
- Fly Ball Communication
- Rundowns
- Positional Responsibility Drills
- Base Running
- Mass Ground Balls and Fly Balls, etc

V. Batting Practice - 'A 12 Player Drill'

This activity is often characterized by one kid batting and eleven kids standing out in the field shagging. Those eleven other kids are often bored and losing interest in the sport minute by minute. Batting Practice is a '12 Player Drill' that is structured so that the entire team is engaged, active and developing skills throughout the activity. An entire section of the Coaching Guide is dedicated to describing how to set up and run a proper Batting Practice. This will be added very soon.

VI. Scrimmage

'Kids sign up to PLAY baseball, not to practice baseball'. Kids do understand that they need to practice to develop their skills, but they also have a strong desire to PLAY.

Our goal as coaches is to create a practice environment that is FUN as well as active, efficient and effective. It is strongly recommended that most every practice conclude with a scrimmage. A scrimmage is not a willy-nilly activity, however. This is a controlled activity where teaching takes place throughout.

While the kids are having FUN PLAYING, the scrimmage serves as a great teaching and learning tool. Following each play, the coaches acknowledge things kids did correctly and instruct as needed. These teaching periods should be brief, 10-20 seconds; keep the game moving!

Progression of Teaching

Some of the content near the bottom of the list below will be moved to other areas of the site. The relevant information is that has numbers to the right of the drills and activities.

The numbers indicate in which practice the drill or activity can be found on the 'Practice Plans' page.

The purpose of this list is to provide a coach with a guide to which skills and concepts to teach first and a logical progression of teaching where each activity builds off those preceding.

The ordering of the list can be debated; I have been rearranging it for years now, but am confident that, as it now stands, it is pretty solid.

It is important to note, especially for coaches working with kids ages 10 and under, that introducing all the contents in the list in one season is not a goal to be concerned with; start at the beginning and progress with your team at a pace that they and you are comfortable with and confident.

It is about a three year process for the players (and coach) to gain a somewhat solid grasp of the game, its concepts and skills. The information on this site is not intended to be consumed in one season. It is a 'guide' for a coach to follow year after year as they progress through the different levels of play.

Beginner and novice coaches don't need to be in a rush to get through all the content. Getting the kids solid in the basics (in the upper part of the list) will give them a good understanding of how to play the game and set them up to get accomplished players given their age.

A veteran coach and coaches working with older players (10 and above) may move through the content quicker than is laid out in the practice plans. It is still important, however, to review and drill these players in the most basic content. Playing the game well and executing more advanced concepts will always be built off the most basic aspects of the game.

Regardless of a coaches experience or the age of their players the Progression of Teaching section below ('Progression of Practice Content') will serve as a checklist throughout the year to make sure that each detail of the game is taught.

Progression of Practice Content

Practice Plans - Sequential Step-by-Step

The practice plans below are set up and paced for a mid-level player pitch team. These are to serve as a guide. A coach can deviate based on the pace their players pick up on the content, the coach's personal style and the specific needs of their team.

These plans introduce content in a thoughtful sequence where each practice provides a foundation for the content taught in the next practice. Day 2 builds of Day 1, Day 3 builds of Day 2, etc. As practices progress into the season 'new' content will, in most cases, be a combination of concepts and actions the kids learned in earlier practices with one new aspect added.

The practice plans alternate between a 90 minute schedule and a 2-hour schedule. Many younger teams only practice for 90 minutes; some older teams will go for two hours. There should not be any feeling that everything listed in a practice must be completed on that day. Just add the stuff you don't get to into the next days plan. Its not a race to teach the kids everything. Over the course of the season every team will progress through the teaching content at a different pace.

Note: if we are successful in keeping our kids moving throughout our practices and recognize that the last 20-30 minutes of practice is a scrimmage, many kids (even young ones) will stay engaged for two hours AND want to practice for 2 hours. ...parents may have a different perspective and we need to keep that in mind when deciding to practice for 2 hours.

The first four practice plans are posted. The content in the plans was covered in the Coaching Clinics and should be fairly familiar to those who attended. Some activities in the plans can be better understood given some supporting information. I will be adding this supporting information over the next few days (written March 5).

The next practice plan (#5) is 'Teaching and Learning Batting Practice'. the first four practices do not follow the Standard Practice Template. The objective of the first four practices is to teach the kids the foundational concepts of defensive positional responsibilities, throwing and basic pitching mechanics, the key focus points of playing catch (moving their feet to throw and catch), receiving throws at a base, fielding, a few simple skill building drills, etc.

...and of course - SCRIMMAGE!

In many parts of the country we are still getting a lot of rain and most coaches will have to deal with wet fields from time to time, but that is no reason to cancel a practice. Short of lightning or a real heavy downpour we can still hold practice. The availability of, or use of, a diamond is not needed to run a championship caliber practice.

Most of the activities in the practice plans can be run most anywhere, a gym, and outdoor covered basketball court, a covered walkway or in a school yard or parking lot that is free of cars.

The parts of the practice plans that may need to be modified are batting practice and scrimmage.

BATTING PRACTICE (CLICK TO SEE A DESCRIPTION OF 'BATTING PRACTICE - A 12 PLAYER DRILL')

Use whiffle balls and shorten up the bases to 40'. At that distance the defensive players will get a decent feel of the ball coming off the bat, will have the opportunity to work on their footwork and see some fly balls. Give the kids the option of using their glove, however it is difficult to catch a whiffle ball with a glove, so encourage them to try defense with no glove.

Split the team into two groups of six and set up two diamonds with two Batting practices going on at the same time. Four kids play defense and follow the same approach as described in "Batting Practice - A 12 Player Drill". The other two kids bat and work on reacting to balls off the bat. After the batter completes their swings they switch with the base runner. After they both get their swings, switch them out with two of the kids on defense.

SCRIMMAGE

Again play using whiffle balls on a 40' diamond. The primary skills the kids are working on is base coverage responsibilities and footwork involved with covering bases, receiving throws at a base and fielding ground balls.

On the smaller diamond we only play with six players (split the team into two groups and have two games going on at one time). I change the 'rules' slightly. We tell the players the TWO objectives on defense are:

1. Execute their base coverage responsibilities.
2. Stop the runner. This is done by throwing the ball ahead of the runner. If there is any question the ball will reach a base 4-5 steps ahead of the runner, they instead throw a full base ahead of the runner. When the runner reaches their base and sees the ball being held by a defensive player at the next base there is no question the runner cannot run any further.

To emphasize this fact the coach calls, "Time; rotate"

We have one batter, four infielders and a catcher. After the batter hits and runs the bases, all players rotate. The infielders rotate from 3b to SS to 2b to 1b to C; the catcher is the next batter and the batter-runner moves to 3b.

Note: The catcher DOES NOT squat right behind home plate. Set a marker 10'-15' behind the plate where the catcher stands while the batter is swinging the bat. After the batter drops the bat, the catcher runs up to their 'position' a step in front of home plate. From there the Catcher works on their leadership and decision making skills by calling to the defense where to throw the ball.

The catcher MUST wear a helmet (to protect them from a flying bat), ideally one with a face guard.

On the first day, like the first day of any new activity, this scrimmage format will be a bit wonky. Once the kids get the idea of 'get the runner out' out of their heads and grasp the concept of 'stop the runner', the drill starts running clean and fast. Expect to get 2-3 batters hitting and running the bases per minute.

This format of scrimmage also gets the kids in tune to the idea that "The runner is safe a lot" in any baseball or softball game. But on each play we still must accomplish the goal of 'stopping the runner(s)'. Given this realization the kids begin to feel empowered by the act of stopping the runner. When it comes to real games, where the runner(s) is often safe, the players will recognize they have still accomplished something by 'stopping the runner(s)'. And not giving away bases by making poor throwing decisions resulting in overthrows and runners advancing further than they should have.

IMPORTANT NOTE: When working on wet pavement it is important to remind the kids that it is slippery and in this situation they have to control their giddiness and move a bit slower and not try to stop and change directions.

VIDEO

Video is being added to illustrate the drills in the practice plans. The video links take you to Youtube.

When you are finished watching a video, click the 'back arrow' at the upper left hand of the Youtube page. Sometimes it is necessary to click the back arrow twice to get back to the Baseball Positive site.

Practice #1

(Note: Practice can begin one hour prior to your assigned field time – a diamond is only needed for Scrimmage)

Pre- Practice

Whiffle Ball Batting - or any activity except kids playing catch on their own
(see 'Coaching Guide - Info on This Page - Whiffle Ball Batting')

0:00 - 0:10

Introductions – learn everyone's name and where they go to school

0:10 - 0:20

Teach:

"Ready Position" prior to every throw and when each pitch is released in scrimmage
- Not optional – 'football helmet'

Stance at a base prior to receiving a throw

- Not allowed to touch the base – "The base is for the runner, the ball is for the defense"

- Stand on the side of the base; the same side the ball is coming from
- First Baseman stands in front of the base, but does not touch the base
- “Ready Position” – never stretch before the ball has been thrown (and only on a force)

Receiving a Throw at a Base (VIDEO: Receiving a Throw at a Base)

- “Move Feet to Catch”
- “Ball first, base second” – ‘The ball is the key to the base’
- “Look for other runners” – immediately after making the play at the base

0:20 - 0:25 Underhand Toss (see 'Skill Building Warm-up - Fielding - Underhand Toss/throwing on the Run')

VIDEO: Underhand Toss)

0:25 - 0:45 Infield Base Coverage / Outfielders Backing up Bases – “Baseball/Softball is a Game of Movement”

(see 'Defensive Positional Responsibilities' page)

- Two groups of six players - 10 minutes at each station

0:45 - 0:50 <Break>

0:50 - 1:15 Playing Catch Practice – “The Most Important Part of the Day”

- 5 min Receiving Throws

“Ready Position”

“Move Feet to Catch”

“Reach Forward to Catch”

- 10 min Throwing Drills – Basic Mechanics (Note: head and momentum in straight line)

Turn and Pull

Snap

Play Catch from 30’ – 40’

- 10 min Throwing Drills – Footwork

Shuffle

Shuffle, Pull, Snap, momentum (“Follow your head”)

Play Catch from 60' – “Move your feet to catch; move your feet to throw”

1:15 – 1:35

Scrimmage

- Discipline/Correction Points:

--> 1. Infield Base Coverage, 2. Backing up Bases – Outfield

(see 'Defensive Positional Responsibilities' page)

- Coach pitches from 20'-30', pitcher plays from rubber. One batter, runners at 1st & 2nd; nine position players

- Each batter bats one time. After the first three bat, switch them to defense

1:35 – 1:40

Wrap-up: “Baseball/Softball is a Game of Movement”

Practice #2

(Note: start practice 30 minutes prior to your assigned field time – don't need the field except for PFP & Scrimmage)

Pre- Practice Whiffle Ball Batting - or any activity except kids playing catch on their own

(see 'Coaching Guide - Info on This Page - Whiffle Ball Batting')

0:10 - 0:20 Teach:

“Ready Position” prior to every throw and when each pitch is released in scrimmage

Not optional – ‘football helmet’ (review)

Stance at a base prior to receiving a throw

See Practice #1 (review)

Receiving a Throw

See Practice #1 (review)

Three Rules for Individuals on Defense (NEW) see Rules for Defensive:

1. Ball, 2. Base, Back up

0:20 - 0:25 Underhand Toss (see 'Skill Building Warm-up - Fielding - Underhand Toss/throwing on the Run')

(VIDEO: Underhand Toss)

0:25 - 0:35 Infield Base Coverage / Outfielders Backing up Bases – “Baseball/Softball is a Game of Movement”

(see 'Defensive Positional Responsibilities' page)

Two groups of six players - 5 minutes at each station

0:35 – 0:50 Receiving a Throw at a Base

(Skill Building Warm up page, found under 'Receiving Throws at a Base')

(VIDEO: Receiving a Throw at a Base)

0:50 - 0:55 <Break> (this is an opportunity for coaches to talk over the second half of practice)

0:55 - 1:15 Playing Catch Practice – “The Most Important Part of the Day”

5 min Receiving Throws

See Practice #1 (review)

15 min Throwing Drills – Basic Mechanics (Note: head and momentum in straight line)

See Practice #1 (review)

Throwing Drills – Footwork

See Practice #1 (review)

1:15 – 1:30 Pitcher’s Fielding Practice (“PFP”) – Teach: “Turn Glove Side” (see Drills page)

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

1-3 Play – pitcher fielding; underhand toss to first base

1-6 Play – Pitcher fielding; overhand throw to second base (“Move Feet to Throw”)

(see Drills page, ‘Pitchers Fielding Practice – Three Groups’)

Note: we only run this drill with two groups the first couple of time (instead of three as shown in the drill diagram). There is too much going on with three groups; wait 'til the kids get accustomed to the environment before running the drill w/three groups.

1:30 – 1:55 Scrimmage:

Teach:

--- Positioning: 1. Infielders: 15' from the base, 2. LF/RF: half way between the bases in front of you

Discipline/Correction Points:

--- 1. Defense Positioning, 2. Infield and Outfield Movement, 3. Receiving a Throw at a Base

Coach pitches from 20'-30', pitcher plays from rubber.

One batter; runners at 1st & 2nd; nine position players

Each batter bats 2x. After the first three players bat, switch them to defense

Change all players' defensive position

1:55 – 2:00 Wrap-up: "Baseball/Softball is a Game of Movement"

Practice #3

(Note: start practice 15-30 minutes prior to your assigned field time – don't need the field except for Scrimmage)

Pre- Practice Whiffle Ball Batting (or any activity except kids playing catch on their own)

0:00 - 0:10 Teach: Ground Ball Footwork

0:10 - 0:20 20' Ground Balls (see Skill Building Warm-up - 'Fielding')

(VIDEO: 20' Ground Balls)

(3 min) Group 1: Balls to their LEFT

(3 min) Group 2: 6-4 Play - shortstop to second baseman (Skill Building Warm-up - "Fielding")

(3 min) Group 3: Balls to their RIGHT

0:20 - 0:30 Toss Drills (fly balls) - angling in (see Skill Building Warm-up "Fielding")

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

0:30 - 0:35 <Break>

0:35 - 0:40 Receiving Throws ("Move Feet to Catch) - review teaching and run the kids through the movement

1. "Ready Position"
2. "Move Feet to Catch"
3. "Reach Forward to Catch"

0:40 - 0:55 Throwing Mechanics (review)

(7 min.) Playing Catch @ 30'-35' - step and throw (see Playing Catch Practice)

Teaching/Focus Points:

1. Ready Position to Catch
2. Focus on glove elbow: glove elbow up (on stride) and pull

(1 min.) TALK: "Playing Catch Practice – the most important part of the day"

(7 min.) Throwing Drills (review) - "Move Feet to Throw"

- Shuffle
- Shuffle, Pull, Snap, Momentum ("Follow your head")

Playing Catch @ 60'

in a "Ready Position"

- RULE: You ARE NOT allowed to throw the ball if your partner is not

throw"

- Objectives/Focus: Footwork: "Move feet to catch, Move feet to

caught balls, result (movement)

- Coach Mindset: Good throws and an increased percentage of good footwork

- 0:55 - 1:05 Defense Positional Movement (players switch groups after 5 minutes)
- Group 1: Infield Base Coverage (see Defensive Positional Responsibilities page)
- Group 2: Outfield - Backing up Bases (see Defensive Positional Responsibilities page)
- 1:15 - 1:35 Scrimmage --- each batter bats 1x (see Defensive Positional Responsibilities page)
- Teach:
- LF/RF have two bases to back up (some throwing angles to second base go more toward the LF or RF than the CF)
 - Discipline/Correction Points:
 - > same as Practice #2
 - LF/RF be aware of when backing up second base is the priority
-

Practice #4

(Note: practice can begin 1 hour prior to your assigned field time – don't need the field except for Scrimmage)

Pre- Practice Whiffle Ball Batting (found on 'Coaching Guide' page)

0:00 - 0:05 Underhand Toss / Throwing on the Run (Skill building Warm-up page; found under 'Fielding')

(VIDEO: Underhand Toss)

0:05 - 0:15 20' Ground Balls (Skill building Warm-up page; found under 'Fielding')

(VIDEO: 20' Ground Balls)

(3 min) Group 1: balls to their LEFT

(3 min) Group 2: balls to their RIGHT

(3 min) Group 3: 4-6 underhand toss (Shortstop to the second baseman)

0:15 - 0:25 Receiving a Throw at a Base - "Cover the base with your eyes"

Tag Play at Third Base (Skill Building Warm up page, found under 'Receiving Throws at a Base')

(VIDEO: Receiving a Throw at a Base)

0:25 - 0:35 Pitcher Defensive Responsibilities, Balls hit to the infield

1. Ball, 2. Base, 3. Back-up (working in a straight line toward first/third base (L/R)

3-1 play (cover the base)

(Defensive Positional Responsibilities: Pitchers Responsibilities - balls hit in the infield)

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

4-3 play (backing up the base)

(Defensive Positional Responsibilities: Pitchers Responsibilities - balls hit in the infield)

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

0:35 - 0:40 <Break>

0:40 - 1:15 Playing Catch Practice*

1:15 - 1:25 Toss Drills (fly balls) - angling back (Skill building Warm-up page; found under 'Fielding')

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

(players MUST use proper throwing technique throwing back in to the coach – “Move Feet”)

1:25 - 1:30 <Break>

1:30 - 1:55 Scrimmage (each batter bats 2x)

Teach:

- LF/RF have two bases to back up

(some throwing angles to second base go more toward the LF or RF than the CF)

Discipline/Correction Points:

- same as Practice #2

- LF/RF be aware of when backing up second base is the priority

1:55 - 2:00 Wrap-up: "Baseball/Softball is a Game of Movement"

*Playing Catch Practice – Details of Content

(5) Teaching Batting

"You don't swing the bat with your arms" – legs power the hands/wrists

"Your Legs Swing the Bat" – biggest muscles; they "Turn Fast"

(5) Drills

Twist

Turn back; Turn fast

(5) Teaching Throwing/Pitching Mechanics

"You don't throw the ball with your arm" the big muscles in your legs and back

start the arm moving, delivering it to a point out in front of your head

Demonstrate the "Turn and Pull" action

(5) Drills

Turn & Pull ("Head is steering wheel")

Wrist Action

Teeter-Totter

Rocking

(10) Pitching @ 30'-35' (from Power Position)

- IMPORTANT: tell the players this will feel weird the first few times they pitch with

Rocking action

- IMPORTANT: tell the players they are not to throw hard like a game;
natural/playing catch speed

'Rock, Rock, Turn & Pull'

'Rock, Rock, Pull and Snap'

(5) Position Player Throwing and Receiving - "Move feet to catch and throw"

Practice #5

TEACHING AND LEARNING HOW BATTING PRACTICE IS STRUCTURED

"Batting Practice is a 12 Player Drill"

Pre-practice Whiffle Ball Batting (found on 'Coaching Guide' page)

0:00 - 0:15 Skill Building Warm-up

- 20' Ground Balls (see 'Skill Building Warm-up - Fielding - 20' Ground Balls')

(VIDEO: 20' Ground Balls)

- Toss Drills - angling in (Skill Building Warm-up - "Fielding")

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

- Infield Base Coverage (4 – 1 = 3) (see Defensive Positional Responsibilities page)

0:15 - 0:25 Playing Catch Practice

- Pitching Using the Rocking action

- Positional Player playing catch footwork – "Move feet to catch, move feet to throw"

0:25 - 0:30 <Break>

0:30 - 1:30 Introduce and teach the kids and coaches how batting practice is run

(see the 'Batting Practice' page)

Practice #6

(Note: the first activities of practice do not require access to a diamond - this allows a team to start this practice 45 minutes prior to their assigned field time.)

Pre- Practice Whiffle Ball Batting (found on 'Coaching Guide' page)

0:00 - 0:10 Teach running through first base and how the drill is run (Skill Building Warm-up page – 'Base Running')

0:10 - 0:20 Skill Building Warm-up

1.....Running Through First Base (Skill Building Warm-up page – 'Base Running')

2.....Toss Drills - angling in (Skill Building Warm-up page – 'Fielding')

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

3.....4-1 Play (see Skill Building Warm-up - Pitchers Fielding)

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

0:20 - 0:35 Playing Catch Practice

(5 min) Batting & Throwing Drills

(5 min) Pitching using Rocking action – 'Rock, Turn and Pull'; 'Rock, Pull and Turn'

(5 min) Position Player actions – "Move feet to throw, move feet to catch"

0:35 - 0:40 Teach: 'Catch, Tag, Power Position" (see Playing Catch Practice - Part III)

0:40 - 0:45 Drill: 'Catch, Tag, Power Position'

0:45 - 0:50 <Break>

0:50 – 1:10 Mass Ground Balls and Fly Balls (see Drills page)

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

(This is the introductory day and will take extra time to teach and get a feel for the flow of the drill.

Ultimately this becomes a 15 minute activity)

1:10 – 2:00 Batting Practice – "A 12 Player Drill" (video)

Practice #7

(Note: the first activities of practice do not require access to a diamond - this allows a team to start this practice 30 minutes prior to their assigned field time.)

Pre- Practice Whiffle Ball Batting (found on 'Coaching Guide' page)

0:00 - 0:10 Skill Building Warm-up

1.....20' Ground Balls: 6-4 Play (Skill Building Warm-up page – 'Fielding')

(For both drills below - VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

2.....1-5 Play (see Skill Building Warm-up - Pitchers Fielding)

3.....5-1 Play (see Skill Building Warm-up - Pitchers Fielding)

0:10 - 0:15 Teach 'Catch, Tag, Power Position' Drill (see Playing Catch Practice - Part III)

0:15 - 0:30 Playing Catch Practice

(4 min) Batting & Throwing Drills

(4 min) Pitching using Rocking action – 'Rock, Turn and Pull'; 'Rock, Pull and Turn'

(4 min) Position Player actions – "Move feet to throw, move feet to catch"

(3 min) 'Catch, Tag, Power Position' Drill (see Playing Catch Practice page – part III)

0:30 - 0:35 <Break>

0:35 - 0:40 Teach: "Step Across" throwing footwork for corner infielders throwing to second base

(see Drills page - 'Three Groups Drills', below the first of the three drill diagrams)

0:40 - 0:55 Team Drills - 'Three Groups Drills' (see Drills page - 'Three Groups Drills')

(For all three drills below - VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

1.....3-6 Play (first baseman throwing to shortstop)

2.....5-4 Play (third baseman throwing to second baseman)

3.....4-3 Play (second baseman throwing to first w/pitcher backing up the base)

0:55 – 1:05 Teach/Review Defensive Positional Responsibilities

Teach: Catcher's Three Defensive Responsibilities

1.....Holler to the defense, prior to each new batter: 1. Number of outs, and 2. Location of Base Runners

2.....While the ball is in play, call out where the ball is to be thrown

3.....On relays to home, communicate with the pitcher

Review: Pitcher's three defensive responsibilities on balls hit in the infield

(Defensive Positional Responsibilities: Pitchers Responsibilities - balls hit in the infield)

1. Ball, 2. Base, 3. Back-up

Teach: Pitcher three defensive responsibilities on balls hit in the outfield

(Defensive Positional Responsibilities: Pitchers Responsibilities – balls hit in the outfield)

1.....“(Always) move towards the ball”

2.....Back up all throws coming in from the outfield

3.....Cut-Relay player on throws to home plate

Review/Define: Outfielders Three Defensive Responsibilities

(see Defensive Positional Responsibilities)

1.....Chase balls hit in the outfield

2.....Chase balls hit to the two infielders in front of you – primarily the LF and

RF

(we don't know for sure the infielder will stop the ball from coming to the outfield)

3.....Back-up a base

1:05 – 1:30 Scrimmage

Practice #8

(Note: the first activities of practice do not require access to a diamond - this allows a team to start this practice 30 minutes prior to their assigned field time.)

Pre-Practice Whiffle Ball Batting (found on 'Coaching Guide' page)

0:00 - 0:05 Teach Drop Step Routine (Skill Building Warm-up page – 'Fielding')

0:05 - 0:15 Skill Building Warm-up

(For all three drills below - VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

1. Toss Drills - Drop step, going back
2. Toss Drills - Drop step, going back
3. Toss Drills - Pop flies, fielder coming in (Skill Building Warm-up page – 'Fielding')

0:15 - 0:30 Playing Catch Practice

(5 min) Batting and Pitching Drills

(4 min) Pitching using Rocking action – 'Rock, Turn and Pull'; 'Rock, Pull and Snap'

(4 min) Position Player actions – "Move feet to throw, move feet to catch"

(2 min) Catch, Tag, Power Position (see Playing Catch Practice - Part III)

0:30 - 0:35 Review: "Turn Glove Side" (see Coaching Guide page - 'Teaching Points')

0:35 - 0:50 Three Groups Drills (see Drills page - 'Three Groups Drills')

(For all three drills below - VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

1. 1-3 Play (bunt)
2. 1-6 Play – "Turn Glove Side"
3. Shortstop going back on a fly ball ("Drop Step")

0:50 - 0:55 <Break>

0:55 - 1:35 Batting Practice – “A 12 Player Drill” (video)

1:35 - 1:40 Teach:

Middle infielders movement on balls hit to the outfield

(see Defensive Responsibilities page – ‘Middle Infield Movement on Balls Hit to the OF’)

Players in the middle of the field (SS, 2b, P) - “Always move towards the ball”

(see Defensive Positional Responsibilities page – ‘SS, 2b, P – Always move towards the ball’)

1:40 – 2:00 Scrimmage

Practice #9

(Note: the first activities of practice do not require access to a diamond - this allows a team to start this practice one hour prior to their assigned field time.)

Pre-Practice Whiffle Ball Batting (found on ‘Coaching Guide’ page)

0:00 - 0:10 Skill Building Warm-up

1. Infield Base Coverage (see Defensive Positional Responsibilities - 'Infield Base Coverage')

2. Pitchers Backing up Bases (see Defensive Positional Responsibilities - 'Pitchers Backing-up Bases')

3. Catch, Tag and Throw using underhand toss - on mini diamond (see Drills page - 'Catch, Tag and Throw')

0:10 - 0:15 Teach: Cut-Relay Footwork Drill

0:15 - 0:30 Playing Catch Practice

(4 min) Batting & Throwing Drills

(4 min) Pitching using Rocking action – ‘Rock, Turn and Pull’; ‘Rock, Pull and Turn’

(4 min) Position Player actions – “Move feet to throw, move feet to catch”

(3 min) Cut-Relay Player Footwork Drill (see Playing Catch Practice page Part III - 'Cut Relay Footwork')

0:30 - 0:35 <Break>

0:35 - 0:40 Teach: Cut-Relay to Home on Mini Diamond (see Drills page - 'Cut-Relay to Home')

0:40 - 0:55 Drill: Cut-Relay to Home on Mini Diamond

- Two groups of six working on two separate mini diamonds

0:55 - 1:00 Teach:

Three Team Defensive Responsibilities:

1. Stop the ball
2. Stop the runner(s)

RULE: “Not allowed to throw the ball overhand after runners stop trying to advance”

3. “Get the ball to the middle of the infield” (to pitcher)

(see Defensive Responsibilities, RULES - ‘Getting the Ball In To the Pitcher’)

1:00 - 1:30 Scrimmage

Practice #10

(Note: the first activities of practice do not require access to a diamond; base running can be done using throw down bases - this allows a team to start this practice 30 minutes prior to their assigned field time.)

Pre- Practice Whiffle Ball Batting (found on ‘Coaching Guide’ page)

0:00 - 0:10 Skill Building Warm-up - Base Running

Teach: Proper running path to the base and where to touch the base when making a turn

Teach: Batter/Base Runner always is wanting to go 'two bases' on a ball hit to the outfield

...until the defense forces them to stop after only going one base.

Drill: Touches & Turns – Three Groups (see SBW, Base running 'Touches & Turns - Three Groups')

Group 1 – first base to third base

Group 2 – second base to home

Group 3 – home to second

...players rotate between groups

0:10 - 0:20 Playing Catch Practice

(1 min) Batting & Throwing Drills (2 each; sets of 5)

(3 min) Pitching using Rocking action – 'Rock, Turn and Pull'; 'Rock, Pull and

Turn'

(4 min) Position Player actions – "Move feet to throw, move feet to catch"

(2 min) Cut-Relay Player Footwork Drill (see Playing Catch Practice page Part III - 'Cut Relay Footwork')

0:25 - 0:30 Review: Cut-Relay Drill on Mini Diamond

0:30 - 0:50 Team Drills

Group 1 (six players): Cut-Relay Drill on Mini Diamond (laid out in center field)

(see Drills page - 'Cut-Relay to Home')

Group 2 (six players): Shortstop overthrow w/RF backing up

(see Drills page - 'Shortstop Overthrow of First Base w/RF Backing-up')

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

...groups switch after 10 minutes

0:50 - 0:55 <break>
0:55 - 1:30 Batting Practice (video: 'Batting Practice - A 12-Player Drill')
1:30 - 1:35 Teach 'Getting The Ball In To The Pitcher' (see Defensive Responsibilities – 'Rules...')
1:35 - 2:00 Scrimmage

Practice #11

Pre-Practice Whiffle Ball Batting (found on 'Coaching Guide' page)

0:00 - 0:10 Skill Building Warm-up

Teach: The three players in the middle of the field (P, SS, 2B)

– "Always move towards the ball"

(see Defensive Positional Responsibilities - "SS, 2b, P -Always Move Towards the Ball")

Teach/Review: Middle Infield Movement on balls to CF (shortstop goes out; second baseman covers the bag)

Drill: Middle Infield Movement on balls hit to the outfield (all three groups do the same drill - no need to rotate)

0:10 - 0:20 Playing Catch Practice

(1 min) Batting & Throwing Drills (2 each; sets of 5)

(3 min) Pitching using Rocking action – 'Rock, Turn and Pull'; 'Rock, Pull and Turn'

(4 min) Position Player actions – "Move feet to throw, move feet to catch"

(2 min) Cut-Relay Player Footwork Drill (see Playing Catch Practice page Part III - 'Cut Relay Footwork')

0:20 - 0:35 Team Drills

--- > Mass Ground Balls and Fly Balls (see Drills page)

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

0:35 - 0:40 <break>
0:40 - 1:10 Batting Practice (Video)
1:10 - 1:35 Scrimmage

Practice #12

Pre-Practice Whiffle Ball Batting (found on 'Coaching Guide' page)

0:00 - 0:10 Skill Building Warm-up

1. SS/2b Movement on Balls to OF – emphasis on CF (see SBW - 'Defensive Responsibilities')

2. Base Running -Turns & Touches (see SBW - 'Base Running')

3. 6-5 play with Pitchers backing-up (see SBW - 'Pitchers Fielding')

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

0:10 - 0:20 Playing Catch Practice

Batting and Throwing Drills

Pitching Practice

Position Player Actions – “Move feet to throw, move feet to catch”

Catch, Tag, Power Position (see Playing Catch Practice page – 'Catch, Tag, Power Position')

0:20 - 0:25 Teach: Receiving Throws at a Base - Force Play (see SBW - 'Receiving Throws at a Base')

0:25 - 0:40 Team Defense – three groups (this is run on your regular size diamond)

1. Receiving Throws at a Base - Force Play @ First Base

(For both drills below - VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

2. 1-6 Play - "Turn Glove Side" (see SBW - 'Pitchers Fielding')

3. 1-5 Play (see SBW - 'Pitchers Fielding')

0:40 - 0:45 Teach Sliding (see Drills page - 'Sliding')

- Sit in 'figure four' position (player determine which leg they slide on)
- 'Roller Coaster'

0:45 - 0:55 Sliding Practice

0:55 - 1:00 <Break>

1:00 - 1:30 Batting Practice – "A 12 Player Drill" (Video)

1:30 - 1:35 Teach/Review: (see Defensive Responsibilities page - 'Rules')

Three Individual Defensive Responsibilities: 1. Ball, 2. Base, 3. Back-up

***Outfielders Responsibilities (RF/LF) (see Defensive Responsibilities page - 'Full Team Movement')

1. Chase balls hit to the outfield
2. Back-up ground balls hit to the two players in front of them (Pitcher backs up corner base)
3. Back-up a base

Catchers 'Position' is in front of home plate (see Defensive Responsibilities page, "Rules..." 'Catcher's Responsibilities')

- 1.... Call out number of outs and location of runners before each new batter
- 2.... Holler to defense where to throw the ball during the play
- 3.... Communication with pitcher on cut-relay plays to home

1:35 - 2:00 Scrimmage

Practice #13

Pre-Practice Whiffle Ball Batting (found on 'Coaching Guide' page)

0:00 - 0:10 Skill Building Warm-up

1. Throwing on the Run (Skill Building Warm-up page – 'Fielding')

2. Side Shuffle Playing Catch (Skill Building Warm-up page – ‘Fielding’)

3. Catch, Tag and Throw using underhand toss - on mini diamond

(SEE SKILL BUILDING WARM UP - 'RECEIVING THROWS AT A BASE' SECTION)

0:10 - 0:20 Playing Catch Practice

Batting & Throwing Drills

Pitching Practice

Position Player Actions – “Move feet to throw, move feet to catch”

Cut-Relay Player Footwork Drill (see Playing Catch Practice page Part III - 'Cut Relay Footwork')

0:20 - 0:35 Team Drills

Mass Ground Balls and Fly Balls (see Drills page)

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

0:35 - 0:40 <Break>

0:40 - 1:05 Batting Practice – “A 12 Player Drill” (Video)

1:05 - 1:30 Scrimmage

Practice #14

Pre-Practice Whiffle Ball Batting (found on ‘Coaching Guide’ page)

0:00 - 0:10 Skill Building Warm-up

(For the first two drills below - VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

1. 6-1 Play (see SBW, ‘Pitchers Fielding’)

2. 6-5 Play (w/pitcher backing up) (see SBW, ‘Pitchers Fielding’)

3. 20’ ground Balls (see "Skill Building Warm up - Fielding - 20' Ground Balls")

(VIDEO: 20’ Ground Balls)

0:10 - 0:25 Playing Catch Practice

Batting and Throwing Drills

Pitching Practice

Position Player Actions – “Move feet to throw, move feet to catch”

Replaying The Ball (Teach this action...this is the reason for extra 5 minutes)

(see Playing Catch Practice Page, Part III – 'Replaying the Ball')

0:25 - 0:45 Team Drills - part I

Group 1: SS Overthrows, RF Backing up (see Drills page)

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

Group 2: Catch, Tag & Throw (limit # of throws to 15-20 each player) (see Drills page)

Toss Drills angling back ...if time (if good job w/footwork on C, T, T and we got enough good reps)

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

0:45 - 0:50 <break>

0:50 - 1:10 Team Drills - part II

Two Bases Relay Game - Runner Scoring From Second Base (see Drills page)

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

1:10 - 1:35 Batting Practice (Video: 'Batting Practice – A 12-Player Drill')

1:35 - 1:40 Teach/Review:

Three Team Defensive Responsibilities

1. Stop the ball
2. Stop the runner(s) - RULE: “Not allowed to throw the ball overhand after runners stop trying to advance”
3. “Get the ball to the middle of the infield” (to pitcher)

(see Defensive Responsibilities, RULES - 'Getting the Ball In To the Pitcher')

1:40 - 2:00 Scrimmage

Practice #15

Pre-Practice Whiffle Ball Batting (found on 'Coaching Guide' page)

0:00 - 0:10 Skill Building Warm-up

1. Base Running - Through First Base (see SBW, 'Base Running')
2. Outfielders Backing up Bases (see SBW, 'Defensive Responsibilities')
3. Side Shuffle Throwing with a Partner (see SBW, 'Fielding')

0:10 - 0:20 Playing Catch Practice

Batting and Throwing Drills

Pitching Practice

Position Player Actions – "Move feet to throw, move feet to catch"

Replaying the Ball (see Playing Catch Practice page Part III - 'Replaying the Ball')

0:20 - 0:25 <break>

0:25 - 0:40 Team Drills: Mass Ground Balls & Fly Balls (see Drills page)

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

0:40 - 1:05 Batting Practice (Video: 'Batting Practice – A 12-Player Drill')

1:05 - 1:30 Scrimmage

Practice #16

Pre- Practice Whiffle Ball Batting (see 'Coaching Guide - Table of Contents - Info on This Page - Whiffle Ball Batting')

0:00 - 0:05 Teach: Wild Pitch/Passed Ball Communication (see Skill Building Warm-up - 'Receiving Throws at a Base')

0:05 - 0:15 Skill Building Warm-up

(For the first two drills below - VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

1. 3-1 Play (see SBW – ‘Pitchers Fielding’)
2. 5-1 Play (see SBW – ‘Pitchers Fielding’)
3. Wild Pitch / Passed Ball Communication (see Drills page)

0:10 - 0:20 Playing Catch Practice

Batting & Throwing Drills (2 each; sets of 5)

Pitching using Rocking action

Position Player actions – “Move feet to throw, move feet to catch”

Cut-Relay Player Footwork Drill (see Playing Catch Practice page Part III - 'Cut, Relay Player Footwork')

0:20 - 0:30 Team Drills - part I

Fly Ball Communication (see Drills page)

0:30 - 0:50 Team Drills - part II

Two Bases Relay Game – runner scoring from second base (see Drills page)

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

0:50 - 0:55 <break>

0:55 - 1:20 Bating Practice (Video: ‘Batting Practice – A 12-Player Drill’)

1:20 - 1:25 Review:

Defensive Rules, Positional Responsibilities, Communication - as needed

1:25 - 2:00 Scrimmage

Practice #17

Pre-Practice Wiffle Ball Batting (see ‘Coaching Guide - Table of Contents - Info on This Page - Whiffle Ball Batting’)

0:00 - 0:10 Skill Building Warm-up

1. Receiving Throws at a Base - force (see SBW - 'Receiving Throws at a Base')
2. Receiving Throws at a Base - tag (see SBW - 'Receiving Throws at a Base')

(VIDEO: Receiving a Throw at a Base - tag play)

3. 20' Ground Balls - backhand (see 'SBW - Fielding - 20' Ground Balls')

(VIDEO: 20' Ground Balls)

0:10 - 0:20 Playing Catch Practice

Batting and Throwing Drills

Pitching Practice

Position Player Actions – “Move feet to throw, move feet to catch”

Catch, Tag, Power Position (see Playing Catch Practice - Part III)

0:20 - 0:25 <break>

0:25 - 0:45 Rundowns - Introduction (see Drills page – ‘Rundown – Ambush’)

0:45 - 1:15 Batting Practice (Video: ‘Batting Practice – A 12-Player Drill’)

1:15 - 1:35 Scrimmage

Practice #18

Pre- Practice Whiffle Ball Batting (see ‘Coaching Guide - Table of Contents - Info on This Page - Whiffle Ball Batting’)

0:00 - 0:10 Skill Building Warm-up

1. One Hop Drill (see SBW ‘One Hop Drill’)
2. Toss Drills - Angling In (see SBW ‘Toss Drills - Angling In’)

(VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

3. Throwing on the Run (see SBW ‘Underhand Toss / Throwing on the Run’)

- 0:10 - 0:20 Playing Catch Practice
- Batting & Throwing Drills
 - Pitching Practice
 - Position Player Actions – “Move feet to catch, move feet to throw”
 - Recovering Balls (see ‘Playing Catch Practice - Part III, Recovering Balls’)
- 0:20 - 0:25 <break>
- 0:25 - 0:40 Rundowns - “Ambush” (see ‘Drills - Rundowns’)
- 0:40 - 0:55 Mass Ground Balls and Fly Balls (see ‘Drills – Mass Ground Balls and Fly Balls’)
- (VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)
- 0:55 - 1:00 <break>
- 1:00 - 1:30 Batting Practice (Video: ‘Batting Practice – A 12-Player Drill’)
- 1:30 - 2:00 Scrimmage
-

Practice #19

Pre-Practice Wiffle Ball Batting (see ‘Coaching Guide - Table of Contents - Info on This Page - Whiffle Ball Batting’)

0:00 - 0:10 Skill Building Warm-up

(For all three drills below - VIDEO: Delivering Balls in Drills)

1. 1-2 Play
2. 3-1 Play
3. 5-1 Play

0:10 - 0:20 Playing Catch Practice

- Batting and Throwing Drills
- Pitching Practice

Position Player Actions – “Move feet to throw, move feet to catch”

Recovering Ground Balls (see ‘Playing Catch Practice - Part III, Recovering Balls’)

0:20 - 0:25 <break>

0:25 - 0:45 Ground Ball Communication (see 'Drills - Ground Ball and Base Coverage Communication')

- 10 minutes: three drills involving Pitchers

- 10 minutes: three drills involving SS and/or 2b

0:45 - 1:15 Batting Practice (Video: ‘Batting Practice – A 12-Player Drill’)

1:15 - 1:35 Scrimmage

Sample Practice Plans

It is important to prepare a written practice plan, with time designations for each activity, prior to every practice. This section provides the standard practice template along with six sample practice plans; three that are 90 minutes in length and three that are 2 hours.

These examples are based on you and your players understanding the foundational skills, concepts and pace of activities (which is a result of having run through an activity 2-3 times). After getting through your first 10 practices or so, these will be useful.

Right now they are helpful in painting a picture of what we are striving for in an efficient and productive practice. Note: 'parent helpers' can play a significant role in helping you develop their kids' skills.

A key is to recognize that each practice follows the same pattern and flow. After looking at the practice plans, pick one and look up the drill diagrams for that single practice. Drill diagrams are sorted (or will be if not there now) by type i.e., 'Fielding', on their own pages in the Coaching Guide Folder.

Note: It will take a few practices before the coaches, adult assistants and kids get a feel for the flow of the schedule. It is suggested that Batting Practice not be in the schedule the first 3-4 practices. This allows extra time for the other segments of practice to run longer while everyone gets accustomed to those. Whiffle Ball Batting Practice, which starts each day, gets the kids some swings. They also get some swings during the scrimmage at the conclusion of practice.

Plan to set aside one practice, following those first few practices, and dedicate most of that day to teaching the batting practice routine to the kids and other adults. Explain the routine, set up the three groups. Run through the rotations slowly; continue to check to see that everyone, including

yourself, is correctly going through the task for their spot on the field. Take the time to stop and correct and give direction as needed, so at the conclusion of the day everyone has an idea of what all players and coaches are doing at each point on the field during batting practice.

(Practice Plans for Tee-Ball and Coach/Machine Pitch levels of play are not so detailed and often are only 60 or 75 minutes. These will be added to the site in March.)

Sample 90-Minute Practice Plans - Three Examples

Practice Plan Template - 90 Minutes

(0:10) - 0:00	Whiffle Ball Batting
0:00 – 0:10	Skill Building Warm-up
0:10 – 0:20	Playing Catch Practice
0:20 – 0:25	<Break>
0:25 – 0:40	Team Skills and Drills
0:40 – 1:05	Batting Practice
1:05 – 1:30	Scrimmage

Practice Plan, 90-minute - Example #1.jpg

Rain Wet Day Practice (and when no diamond is available)

Make every effort to avoid cancelling practices unless there are extreme circumstances. Scout out your neighborhood to identify covered areas; this includes 10' wide covered walkways at buildings such as schools, etc. A productive practice can be run using a covered walkway. Most, if not all, of the activities below and be run on a concrete surface in a school yard. As you go through the list you will notice that few practice activities require good weather, a field or a diamond.

Make it clear to parents that you have a rain day plan and that you have no plans of cancelling practices.

Menu of Activities

Whiffle Ball Batting

see Skill Building Warm-up List (30+ drills)

Defensive Positional Responsibilities

Playing Catch Practice

Getting the Ball in to the Pitcher

Receiving Throws at a Base - tag play

Catch, Tag & Throw (full diamond or MINI diamond)

Rundowns - 'Ambush'

Cuts-Relays: MINI Diamond

Mass Ground Balls & Fly Balls

Fly Ball Communication

Base Running

Pitchers Defense

Three Groups Drills

Wild Pitch / Past Ball Communication

Batting Mechanics Drills

Throwing Mechanics Drills

Catcher's Stance and Receiving & Drills

Wiffle Ball Scrimmage

Pregame Practice

When the season starts, skills often erode, at the time the kids are just starting to 'Get it'.

Parents Meeting: 'Game Time' begins at the start of Pregel Practice. Players are dismissed following postgame team meeting. ...The first 15 minutes are batting; if your child is late they miss out on this opportunity.

Post the Game Admin Sheet in Dugout:

Starting Line-up / Batting Order

Pre-planned Substitutions

Starting Pitcher

First Relief Pitcher

Additional Players Who Might Pitch

Pregame Practice Routine:

0:60 - 0:45	Whiffle Ball Batting
0:45 - 0:35	Skill Building Warm up
0:35 - 0:25	Playing Catch Practice
0:25 - 0:15	Team Drill
0:15 - 0:05	Starting Pitcher/Catcher prep / Ground Balls & Fly Balls
0:05 - 0:00	Water, Pee, Last Words

Dugout/Game Management

Head Coach manages line up and on-field activities / communicates with Asst #1 in advance re potential changes at Pitcher

Asst #1 manages pitchers & catchers

Asst #2 manages dugout and players / Coordinates with Parent Liaison

Parent Game Liaison is 'go-between' parents in stands and kids in dugout.

Parents do not interact with their kids from the time they drop them off for Pre-Game practice until head coach dismisses players following post-game meeting. All interaction between parent and child during that time is limited to cheering during the game or via the parent liaison. ...Exception is injury or illness.

Players are expected to participate the entire 'Game Day time period' unless they have something unique going on at school: one-time piano recital, one time science fair, etc. (Each of these types of events are known weeks or months in advance and the coach needs to be notified as soon as these outside activities are known.)

Tips for Greater Practice Efficiency

Always have a Written Plan prepared in advance, with time periods stated for each activity and defined assignments for each adult participating.

Early on this will take some time, however as the season progresses a coach's skills in preparing a plan will improve a great deal. Using the Practice Plan Template in the Coaching Guide will help cut down on prep time. Most practices vary little from one to the next. Often preparing a new practice plan is as simple as pulling out a couple activities and replacing them with new ones. There are not a lot of different 'core' activities. Over time the plans will start to look very much the same with just a few alterations for any given day.

Do not allow players to chase missed throws (only in scrimmages). ;One of the biggest time wasters, if not the number one culprit, is kids chasing missed played balls during drills and while playing catch during practices. When a kid is chasing a misplayed ball, that player is not working on their skills. In many cases, when one player is chasing a ball, the result is many other players' skill building activity also comes to a halt.

Position adults where missed balls will end up. A key part of any effective 12U practice plan has adults assigned to spots on the field in relation to a given activity where balls are likely to be missed by a player. Those adults carry a handful of balls with them. **When a ball gets past a player, an adult immediately flips them a new ball.**

Maintain a supply of five gallon buckets: Ideally each coach/adult has their own bucket for balls. A well-structured practice has multiple activities and involves quick transitions by the coaches from one spot on the field to another. When each adult had their own supply of balls, they just need to get their body to the right spot on the field; they have their most important tool with them – their personal supply of balls.

Buckets can be used at the end point of a drill where players need somewhere to place the ball they were handling. Having a bucket of balls at the point in a drill or activity where balls are likely to be missed and players will need a ready supply of replacement balls.

Important rule to establish on Day 1: “Dunks Only; No Jump Shots”. Immediately squash the players desire to see if they can ‘shoot’ balls into a bucket. This is major time waster and turns into chaos very quickly.

Set down your bat and pick up balls using both hands --- no further explanation needed. Either you understand this statement or will figure it out after the first practice or two.

Give a specific number when asking kids to pick up balls or equipment. When we say, “Ok, pick it all up” each individual sees ALL the balls or ALL the equipment and doesn't recognize that the volume of items to pick-up is divided by 12. Instead say, “Everybody pick up five balls”, or “Everybody pick up two pieces of equipment”. Not only does clearly illustrate that their portion of the overall task is quite small, but because their portion is so small, their competitive juices often kick in and they will try to get five balls faster than their buddy; or try to get six or seven balls, so they can claim they got more than their buddy.

Keep a supply of cones – the 8” disc style used by soccer coaches.

These clearly indicate where kids are supposed to stand for drills and in other activities. Plan ahead where cones will be located on the field for each activity. This might take 10 minutes when planning your first practices, but this will make everything run so much smoother and eliminates many behavioral issues before they can begin. This is another habit that will take a little extra time early in the season, but as you get more practices under your belt the time to plan and to position cones will drop down to almost nothing. Cones can be used to indicate a base as well. Have cones in at least two colors, so to differentiate between a base and where you want a player to stand for the start of the drill

The Mini-Diamond, which is used often throughout the season, is something that can be set up in seconds using cones.

The younger the kids the more valuable the use of cones. Tee-Ball age kids should have a cone representing every spot on the field they need to stand. I would not hesitate setting them out on the field during Tee Ball games if the other coach would agree; and they would be crazy not to.

Train/Discipline players to always RUN from spot to spot (establish concrete expectations and enforce them). Getting kids to transition quickly during between activities can add 10-15 minutes of skill building work each practice. Early in the season, invest the time to make individuals and the team (when appropriate) to 'go back' and transition again at FULL SPEED. Early on some practice time is lost to these disciplinary activities. This time investment up front will gain a team hours of effective work as the season progresses.

Wiffle Balls - Indispensable tool for batting; they make it possible to practice hitting live pitches almost anywhere and anytime. These can be pitched to a batter straight on from a very close distance resulting in a higher percentage of good pitches to hit. They are safe, don't fly far and can quickly be collected, so to get in more pitches and swings. They allow us to hold a batting practice in most any environment. ...No Field Assignment Required.

NOTE: Pickle Balls are much sturdier, last longer, are easier to throw accurately and have a better feel coming off the bat

Synthetic Balls - Used in wet conditions. Using leather baseballs in a damp climate is costly and a safety risk to kids. When leather balls get wet they become heavier and harder resulting in a ball that no longer plays like a good baseball. Effectively they are then no good for further use and have to be replaced. More importantly, the added weight (even after they have 'dried') puts a child's arm at a much greater risk for injury. Synthetic Balls do not have a cloth component and resist water. They are also less expensive to purchase than leather balls. They play just as well as leather, given the age group we are dealing with. Save the leather balls for clear, sunny and dry days.

Throw Down Bases - Same use as cones, but give a real feel when being used as a 'base' in a drill. Ideal to help build a MINI Diamond anywhere, anytime.

Tees (for all age groups...including Major Leaguers) – These can be used every day during batting practice. Incorporate them into the offensive rotation with the next batter(s) in line to hit live hitting balls of Tees.