

# DYA REC Softball Coaches' Handbook

## Senior Division

## **One Key to Success and Some Tools**

One thing that you can do as a coach to significantly improve your chances of success and your players' enjoyment of softball is to have a specific plan for every practice. The more you prepare for practice, the better practice will run and the more the players will get out of it. With a practice plan you ensure that your practice stays organized, keeps the players active (always try to minimize players standing around while 1 player does something), and checks off the required skills for the age group you are coaching.

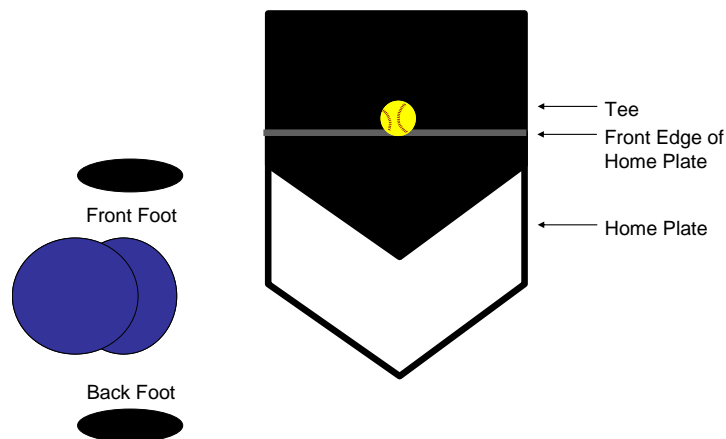
In order to get you jump started, there are practice plans starting for your first 4 weeks. These plans should make it easy for you to get started and set you on the right course for your league. *These plans are not set in stone.* They have been included to give you a guideline to follow. Feel free to make modifications and changes to suit your style, or use them as written. They are simply a tool to help reduce the amount of work you need to do as a head coach while providing a foundation for teaching your players.

Finally, there is a sample agenda for your Parents' Meeting. Plan on having this meeting immediately following your first practice. There is also a template for organizing your games so you can rotate players easily and keep the game moving.

## Using a T...Correctly

The Tee is one of the best hitting aids for developing a player's swing and for batting practice for seasoned hitters. Coaches have a tendency to set a T directly on top of home plate during games and in batting practice. This places the ball in the center of home plate. If the player takes her stance with the front foot near the front edge of the plate, then she is going to be making contact with the ball directly in front of her belly button. At this point in her swing, her hands will not be in the correct location to be successful. The only times a player would hit a pitch that deep in her stance would be on an outside pitch (which a ball in the center of home plate is not), a pitch she was fooled on, or a pitch with 2 strikes. An inside pitch (inside is defined as the middle half of the plate in towards the hitter) should be hit just in front of the lead knee. It is at this point that her swing is the most powerful, not back by her belly button. Since we're lining the T up for the ball to be in the middle of the plate, the T must be placed slightly forward of home plate with the player maintaining the same location for her stance, as depicted in the diagram below:

At practice make sure they have a reference point for where home plate is located, and do not let them take their stance directly across from the ball.



## Seniors Skill Goals

<u>SIDE OF BALL</u>	<u>POSITIONS(S)</u>	<u>SKILL</u>
Defense	Catcher	Pop Ups
Defense	Catcher	Tags
Defense	Catcher	Mask
Defense	First Base	Pop Ups
Defense	Infield	Pop Ups
Defense	Infield	Balls in Front
Defense	Infield	Defensive Situations with Runners on
Defense	Infield	Communication
Defense	Infield	Bunt Defense
Defense	Outfield	Defensive Situations with Runners on
Defense	Outfield	Drop Step
Defense	Outfield	Backing up outfielders
Defense	Outfield	RF to 1st
Defense	Outfield	Communication
Defense	Pitcher	Covering home
Defense	Second Base	Steals
Defense	Second Base	Covering First
Defense	Second Base	Tags
Defense	Second Base	Covering Second
Defense	Shortstop	Steals
Defense	Shortstop	Backing up Third
Defense	Shortstop	Covering Second
Defense	Shortstop	Tags
Defense	Team	Relays/hitting cutoffs
Defense	Third Base	Steals
Defense	Third Base	Fouls
Defense	Third Base	Tags
Defense	Third Base	Pop Ups
Offense	Base running	Rounding bases
Offense	Base running	Sliding
Offense	Base running	Stealing
Offense	Hitting	Bunting
Softball	Rules	Baserunner interference
Softball	Rules	Fielder interference
Softball	Rules	Catcher interference
Softball	Rules	Two feet on the rubber, legal pitch, crow hopping
Softball	Rules	Dropped third strike
Offense	Hitting	Signs

Offense	Hitting	Slap hit
Offense	Baserunning	Dive back
Defense	Throwing	Underhand
Defense	Team	Sun
Defense	Outfield	Backing up bases
Defense	Infield	Double plays
Defense	Infield	Holding Runners
Defense	Infield	Wild pitches and passed balls

# Seniors Practice Plans

## Week 1

### Equipment Needed

Bats, Softballs, Helmets, **Cardboard** (5-6ft long, 2-3ft wide), **Blanket**, T First Aid Kit

Duration	Activities	
10 min	<b>Intros</b> <b>Team bonding</b> <b>Stretching</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stretch Legs</li> <li>• Stretch Arms</li> </ul>	<b>Conditioning</b> (down 1B line) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jog</li> <li>• Jog Backwards</li> <li>• High Knee</li> <li>• Butt Kick</li> <li>• Karaoke/Grapevine</li> <li>• Defensive Shuffle</li> </ul>
20 min	<b>Throwing and Catching</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overhand</li> <li>• Underhand</li> <li>• Backhand</li> <li>• Three Quarter</li> <li>• <i>Throwing Circle</i></li> </ul>	
5 min	<b>Water Break and Team bonding</b>	
5 min	<b>Hitting and Baserunning Signs</b>	
10 min	<b>Sliding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steal 2<sup>nd</sup> with <i>Figure 4</i> (blanket on the cardboard and a <b>HELMET</b>)</li> </ul>	
10 min	<b><i>Watch and Take Advantage with Delayed Steals and Dive Backs</i></b>	
5 min	<b>Water Break and Team bonding</b>	
20 min	<b>Hitting Stations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bunting</li> <li>• <i>Slap Hitting</i> off of a T</li> <li>• Coach Pitch</li> </ul>	
5 min	<b>Rules: Infield Fly Rule</b> <b>Team bonding</b>	

**Note:** Drills in italics are described in detail in the Drills Glossary.

## Week 2

### Equipment Needed

Bats, Softballs, Helmets, T  
First Aid Kit

Duration	Activities	
10 min	<b>Team bonding</b> <b>Stretching</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stretch Legs</li> <li>• Stretch Arms</li> </ul>	<b>Conditioning</b> (down 1B line) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jog</li> <li>• Jog Backwards</li> <li>• High Knee</li> <li>• Butt Kick</li> <li>• Karaoke/Grapevine</li> <li>• Defensive Shuffle</li> </ul>
15 min	<b>Throwing and Catching</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overhand</li> <li>• Underhand</li> <li>• Backhand</li> <li>• Three Quarter</li> <li>• <i>Throwing Circle</i></li> </ul>	
5 min	<b>Water Break and Team Bonding</b>	
20 min	<b>Outfield Fundamentals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Outfield Around</i> with Crow Hop Throw</li> <li>• <i>Drop Step and React</i> with Outside/Inside Roll</li> <li>• <i>Around the Ball</i></li> <li>• Catching into the Sun</li> </ul>	
10 min	<b><i>Watch and Take Advantage with Delayed Steals and Dive Backs</i></b>	
5 min	<b>Water Break and Team Bonding</b>	
20 min	<b>Hitting Stations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft Toss</li> <li>• T work with Inside/Outside Pitches</li> <li>• Player Pitch</li> </ul>	
5 min	<b>Hitter Responsibilities on Steals</b> <b>Rules: Dropped 3<sup>rd</sup> Strike</b> <b>Team bonding</b>	

**Note:** Drills in italics are described in detail in the Drills Glossary.

## Week 3

### Equipment Needed

Bats, Softballs, Helmets, T  
First Aid Kit

Duration	Activities	
10 min	<b>Team bonding</b> <b>Stretching</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stretch Legs</li> <li>• Stretch Arms</li> </ul>	<b>Conditioning</b> (down 1B line) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jog</li> <li>• Jog Backwards</li> <li>• High Knee</li> <li>• Butt Kick</li> <li>• Karaoke/Grapevine</li> <li>• Defensive Shuffle</li> </ul>
10 min	<b>Throwing and Catching</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overhand</li> <li>• <i>Throwing Square</i></li> </ul>	
20 min	<b>Team Defense Fungos with Runners</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Double Plays</li> <li>• Holding Runners</li> <li>• Slap Defense</li> <li>• Force at 3rd, Throw to 1st</li> <li>• Wild Pitches/Passed Balls</li> </ul>	
5 min	<b>Water Break and <i>Team Bonding</i></b>	
15 min	<b>Team Defense</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relays</li> <li>• Cutoffs</li> </ul>	
5 min	<b>Water Break and <i>Team Bonding</i></b>	
20 min	<b>Hitting Stations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• T</li> <li>• Soft Toss Bunting</li> <li>• Player Pitch with <i>Slap Hitting</i></li> </ul>	
5 min	<b>Hitter and Baserunner Signs</b> <b>Team bonding</b>	

**Note:** Drills in italics are described in detail in the Drills Glossary.



## Week 4

### Equipment Needed

Bats, Softballs, Helmets, T  
First Aid Kit

Duration	Activities	
10 min	<b>Team bonding</b> <b>Stretching</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stretch Legs</li> <li>• Stretch Arms</li> <li>• <i>Stars</i> “I Love Softball!”</li> </ul>	<b>Conditioning</b> (down 1B line) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jog</li> <li>• Jog Backwards</li> <li>• High Knee</li> <li>• Butt Kick</li> <li>• Karaoke/Grapevine</li> <li>• Defensive Shuffle</li> </ul>
5 min	<b>Throwing and Catching</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overhand</li> </ul>	
5 min	<b>Water Break and <i>Team Bonding</i></b>	
15 min	<b>Team Defense Fungos</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Texas Leagers/Bloopers</li> <li>• Double Steal</li> <li>• Pickoffs</li> <li>• Backing Up Bases</li> </ul>	
20 min	<b>Team Defense</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bunts</li> <li>• <i>Bunt Around</i></li> </ul>	
5 min	<b>Water Break and <i>Team Bonding</i></b>	
25 min	<b>Hitting Stations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• T</li> <li>• Soft Toss Bunting</li> <li>• Player Pitch with <i>Slap Hitting</i></li> </ul>	
5 min	<b>Rule Review</b> <b>Team bonding</b>	

**Note:** Drills in italics are described in detail in the Drills Glossary.

## OTHER PRACTICE IDEAS

### Equipment Needed

Softballs, Catcher's Gear; First Aid Kit

Duration	Activities	
	Pitchers	Catchers
15 min	<b>Warm Up</b> <i>Speed Throwing</i> <i>Distance Throwing</i>	<b>Warm Up</b> <b>Pickoffs at 1st</b> <b>Pickoffs at 3<sup>rd</sup></b>
5 min	<b>Covering Home</b> (Unless you are going to have 1B cover home)	<b>Framing</b>
10 min	<b>Live Pitching - Hitting Locations</b>	

### Equipment Needed

Softballs, Catcher's Gear, Cones, First Aid Kit

Duration	Activities	
	Pitchers	Catchers
15 min	<b>Warm Up</b> <i>Speed Throwing</i> <i>Distance Throwing</i>	<b>Warm Up</b> <b>Pickoffs at 1st</b> <b>Pickoffs at 3<sup>rd</sup></b> <b>Throwing Balls from the Backstop</b>
5 min	<b>Pitchouts</b>	
10 min	<b>Live Pitching Hitting Locations</b>	

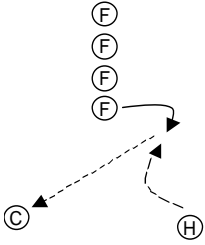
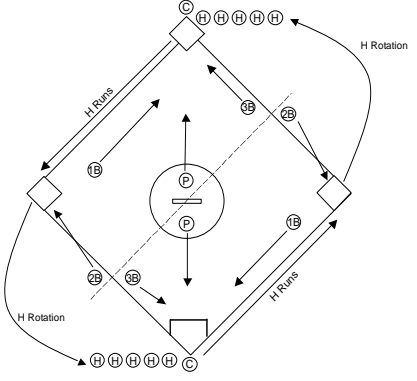
### Equipment Needed

Softballs, Catcher's Gear, Cones, First Aid Kit

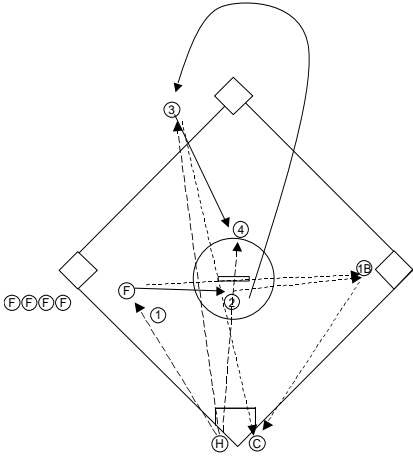
Duration	Activities	
	Pitchers	Catchers
10 min	<b>Warm Up</b> <i>Speed Throwing</i> <i>Distance Throwing</i>	<b>Warm Up</b> <b>Pickoffs at 2<sup>nd</sup></b> <b>Pickoffs at 3<sup>rd</sup></b>
10 min	<b>Live Pitching Hitting Locations</b>	

**Note:** Drills in italics are described in detail in the Drills Glossary.

## Drill Glossary (in alphabetical order)

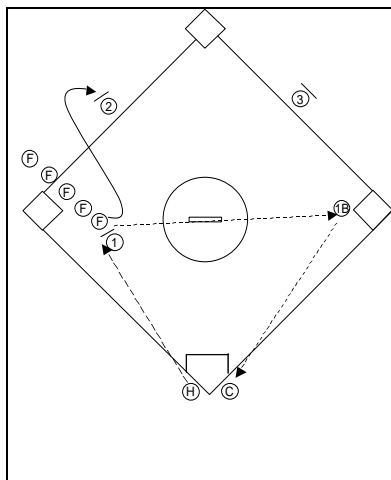
<p><b>Around the Ball</b></p> 	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Practice circling around the ball when catching fly balls.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Line of Fielders. Fungo Hitter. Catcher offset from Hitter.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Fungo Hitter hits high fly balls to allow the Fielder to get around and behind ball. Fielder gets around the ball to line up a throw to the Catcher.</p>
<p><b>Bunt Around</b></p> 	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Players work on bunting and the infield works on bunt defense.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Line of Hitters at Home and 2B. 2 Pitchers in the circle, 1 facing 2B and the other facing Home. 2 Catchers, 1 in the normal position, 1 behind 2B. 2 1Bs, 1 at the normal position, the other as if 3<sup>rd</sup> were 1<sup>st</sup>. 2 2Bs, 1 at the normal position, 1 in foul territory between 3<sup>rd</sup> and Home. 2 3Bs, 1 in normal position, the other inside the baseline between 1B and 2B.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Pitchers throw to their respective Catchers. Hitters lay down the bunt and run to their 1B. Infielders field the ball and throw to their 1B. After running to their 1B, the Hitter moves to the end of the other line.</p>
<p><b>Clank</b></p>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Practice running to different bases after a hit. Conditioning.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Players form groups of 3 at Home. Coach has 2 bats at Home. Players in a line facing 1B.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Coach “clanks” the bats together. Players sprint towards 1B. The first Player rounds 1B, rounds 2B, and stops at 3B. The second Player rounds 1B and stops at 2B. The third Player runs through 1B. The next group gets ready. When the coach “clanks” the bats, the Players on the bases run until they reach Home. Once the Players reach Home they get back in line in a different order.</p> <p><b>Variation:</b> If your Players are ready to slide, have them slide into 2B and 3B.</p>
<p><b>Covering</b></p>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> For adjacent outfielders to practice communication, taking an angle to the ball, and backing each other up.</p>

	<p><b>Setup:</b> 2 lines of Players 40 feet apart. Coach and Catcher setup far enough away to hit fly balls.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Coach hits a fly ball between the 2 Players. One Player calls “Mine”, takes a direct angle, and catches the ball. The other Player takes a deep angle and backs her up.</p>
<b>Crossfire</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Learn to make and catch throws at different positions. Conditioning.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Even lines of Players at 1B, 2B, SS, and 3B. Hitter on each side of Home with a Catcher beside each Hitter.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Hitter on 1B side of Home hits a ball to SS. SS throws to 1B. 1B throws to catcher on her side. SS moves to line at 3B. 1B moves to line at 2B. Hitter on 3B side of Home hits a ball to 2B. 2B throws to 3B. 3B throws to catcher on her side. 2B move to line at SS. 3B runs around Home to line at 1B.</p>
<b>Distance Throwing</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> For the Pitcher to learn to throw hard, focusing more on speed than accuracy.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Mark points at 30, 45, and 60 feet. Pitchers and Catchers pair up.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Pitcher throws 5 balls from 30 feet, then 45, then 60. Repeat.</p>
<b>Drop Step and React</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Learn that the first movement on a fly ball is backwards.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Form as many lines as there are Coaches/Helpers.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Coach points right or left. Player drop steps in that direction. Coach throws the ball so the Player must run back to field the ball. Fielder should get under the ball and make a 2 handed catch above her forehead.</p>
<b>Figure 4</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Learn a basic sliding approach and build Player confidence.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Players need sliding shorts and a sliding pad. Cardboard spread out with blanket at one end. Players in a line with helmets on.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> First Player in line runs towards the cardboard. As she is almost to the blanket, she kicks her unpadding leg out like she is kicking a ball, tucks her padded leg ankle under the knee pit of the unpadding leg, and extends her arms above her head as</p>

	<p>if she is delivering a “high 10.” The Player’s unpadded leg heel should be kept a few inches off of the ground. She should land on her buttocks and padded leg. She should also tuck her chin to keep her head from falling back and hitting the ground. Player should not catch herself with her hands. Her hands should be above her head giving a “high 10.”</p>
<p><b>Foul Line Leadoffs</b></p>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Practice leadoffs and steals.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Pitcher and Catcher assume their positions. All players in a line spread out one beside another. Line should start far enough down the 1B line that the first Player is past the Pitcher. 1B line acts as 1B for each player.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Pitcher throws to Catcher. Players take an aggressive, 3-step leadoff from the baseline. Coach calls out “Back” or Go.” On “Go” the Players sprint to a point that represents 2B, 60 feet away.</p>
<p><b>Getting Hit by a Pitch</b></p>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Develop confidence in the Player so she can bat knowing that if the ball is thrown at her she’ll be able to protect herself.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Player with bat and helmet. Coach with bucket of tennis balls or softies 10 feet away.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Coach throws the ball at the Player. Player rotates her hips backwards slightly and tucks her chin into her chest. The Player should have the back of her lead leg, back of her lead arm, and the side of her lead rib cage exposed to the ball. The Player should not turn such that her spine is exposed to the ball and she should tuck her chin such that the base of her skull and neck are not exposed either.</p>
	<p><b>Note:</b> This drill looks complicated but it’s not and once the players understand it is a lot of fun.</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Make different throws to different bases and field different types of hits. Conditioning.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Line of Players at 3B. Ball in circle. Player at 1B. Hitter and a Catcher.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Hitter hits the ball to the Player at 3B. Player fields the ball and throws to 1B. 1B throws it to the Catcher. Player runs toward the ball in the circle, scoops the ball up on the run, and makes a three quarter throw to 1B. 1B throws it to the Catcher. Player runs around 2B and fields a fly ball from the Hitter and throws it to the Catcher. Hitter hits a slow roller</p>

	<p>through the circle. The Player scoops the ball and drops it in the circle for the next Player.</p>
<b>Japanese</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> For Pitchers and Catchers to learn to work together in a pressure situation.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Set cones/markers at distances of 15, 30, 45, and 60 feet. Separate lines of cones/markers for each Pitcher/Catcher pair.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Pitchers start at the 15 foot cone/marker. The Pitcher must throw 3 strikes before proceeding to the next cone. The first Pitcher/Catcher combination to throw 3 strikes from the 60 foot cones wins.</p> <p><b>Variation:</b> Make it a competition between groups. Whichever groups lose do <i>Stars</i>, crab walk, etc.</p>
<b>Killers</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Practice getting behind the ball while fielding. Conditioning.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Players pair up and stand about 30 feet apart.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Player 1 throws fly balls to Player 2 in various locations that force Player 1 to run and get behind the ball.</p>
<b>Out of the Box Race</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Learn to get out of the box quickly after a hit.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Players form 2 even lines. Coach a short distance away with a tennis/racquet ball in each hand.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Coach raises arms straight out, shoulder high. Coach drops the balls. Player must catch ball before it bounces a second time. If a Player misses the ball they are out. Play continues until all Players in one line eliminated. Coach should move further and further away to increase the difficulty.</p> <p><b>Variation:</b> The losing line does <i>Stars</i>, crab walk, etc.</p>
<b>Outfield Around</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Practice fielding all types of hits and throwing to different bases. Conditioning.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Line of Fielders in RF. Base Players depending on the Round. Fungo Hitter and Catcher.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b></p> <p>Round 1</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ground Ball. Throw to 1B. Run to CF</li> <li>2. Fly Ball. Throw to 3B. Run to LF.</li> <li>3. Fly Ball. Throw to H.</li> </ol>

	<p>Round 2</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ground Ball. Throw to 3B. Run to CF.</li> <li>2. Ground Ball. Throw to H. Run to LF.</li> <li>3. Fly Ball. Run to H.</li> </ol> <p>Round 3</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fly Ball. Throw to H. Run to CF.</li> <li>2. Fly Ball. Throw to 3B.</li> <li>3. Ground Ball. Run to 2B. Throw to H.</li> </ol> <p>After the final throw of the Round, the Player runs around H to the end of the line in RF.</p>
<b>Pickoffs with Hula Hoop</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> For the Catcher to learn to throw to a location.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Catcher behind Home in full gear. Coach/Pitcher in the circle. Hula Hoop stood up or held up at 2B/3B.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Coach/Pitcher delivers the ball. Catcher should be off of her knee saver pads. Catcher comes out of her stance and makes the throw.</p>
<b>Pickoffs with Trash Can</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> For the Catcher to learn to throw to a more focused location.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Catcher behind Home in full gear. Coach/Pitcher in the circle. Trash can on its side at 2B/3B.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Coach/Pitcher delivers the ball. Catcher should be off of her knee saver pads. Catcher comes out of her stance and makes the throw.</p>
<b>Relay Race</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Practice relays and making accurate throws.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Players form groups of 3 and stand 30 feet apart.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> One of the outside Players starts with the ball. She drops it over her head, turns and picks it up, then throws it to the middle Player, who turns and throws it to the last Player. Drill repeats in the opposite direction. After the players have made a few cycles have the Players switch positions.</p> <p><b>Variation:</b> Make it a competition between groups. The losing groups do <i>Stars</i>, crab walk, etc.</p>
<b>Rotating Infield</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Learn to make throws to 1B from each position in the infield and work on ground ball fundamentals.</p>

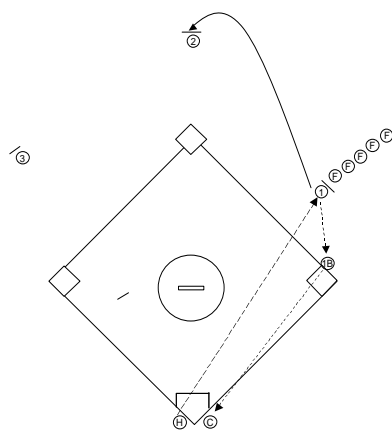


**Setup:** Line of players at 3B position. Fungo Hitter and a Catcher at Home. Player/Coach at 1B.

**Execution:** Fungo hitter hits ground ball to player at 3B. Player fields the ball and throws to 1B. 1B throws to the Catcher at Home. Player then begins forming a line at SS. Next Player in line fields the next ball. Process continues until all Players have fielded and thrown balls from 3B, SS, and 2B.

**Variation:** Add conditioning to the drill by having the Player field the ball at 3B, run to SS, field a ball there, run to 2B, field a ball there, then run around 1B and Home back to the end of the line at 3B.

### Rotating Outfield



**Purpose:** Learn to make throws to bases from each position in the outfield and work on ground/fly ball fundamentals.

**Setup:** Line of players at RF position. Fungo Hitter and a Catcher at Home. Player/Coach at 1B and 2B/3B.

**Execution:** Fungo hitter hits ball to player in RF. Player fields the ball and throws to 1B. 1B throws to the Catcher at Home. Player then begins forming a line in CF. Next Player in line fields the next ball. Process continues until all Players have fielded and thrown balls from RF, CF, and LF.

**Variation:** Add conditioning to the drill by having the Player field the ball in RF, run to CF, field a ball there, run to LF, field a ball there, then run around Home back to the end of the line in RF.

### Run Throwing

**Purpose:** Develop a Pitcher's stride and teach her to exert herself.

**Setup:** Pitcher with a ball facing a net/fence from 20 feet away.

**Execution:** Pitcher takes several quick steps or strides, leaps, drags her back foot, and delivers the ball. Pitcher steps/strides should lengthen and become more rapid throughout the drill.

### Bunting

**Purpose:** Learn the most basic bunt.

**Setup:** Player with bat and helmet. Coach/Partner several feet directly in front of the Player.

**Execution:** Coach/Partner tosses the ball into the strike zone. The Player slides her top hand to the taper on the barrel of the bat, turns her hips slightly, and bends her knees. The bat may



	<p>be at an angle or parallel to the ground at eye level. She should move the bat up and down using her arms and flexing her knees making contact with the ball. She should not jab at the ball.</p>
<b>Slap Hitting</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Learn to slap hit in order to start closer to 1B and put additional pressure on the defense.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> T in front of fence or net. Player in a position relative to the T that would place her at the back of the batter's box on the 1B side of the T.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Player crosses her left foot over her right to begin her momentum then takes a full step with her right foot, and hits the ball. She should drop the bat and take a few strides towards 1B.</p> <p><b>Variations:</b> Place a cone/mark for the Player to go around if she is moving out of the side of the batter's box and missing the ball. Use a Pitcher instead of a T.</p>
<b>Speed Throwing</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Develop a Pitcher's arm speed.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Bucket of balls. Pitcher in "open" position (standing sideways) in front of a net or fence. Coach slightly in front of and to the side of the Pitcher.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Coach soft tosses the ball to a point where the Pitchers arm would be straight out in front of her at the 9 o'clock position (for a right handed pitcher with the clock facing her). Pitcher catches the ball and fires it into the net/fence. As soon as the Pitcher releases the ball, the Coach tosses another.</p>
<b>Square Catch</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> To learn to turn the feet in the direction the Player is throwing</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> 4 Players stand in a square, at a throwing distance apart.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Players throw the ball around the square in one direction 5 times then reverse the direction for 5 times</p> <p><b>Variation:</b> Make it a competition between multiple squares. The losing squares do <i>Stars</i>, crab walk, etc.</p>
<b>Stars</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Fun conditioning</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Players spread out enough so they can't kick each other.</p>

	<p><b>Execution:</b> Player jumps into air and extends her arms and legs such that her hands, feet, and head form the 5 points of a star. While in the air, she should shout “I LOVE SOFTBALL!” Repeat 10 or more times.</p>
<b>Team Bonding</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Team atmosphere and team relationships are very important to the overall success of your team. Building a close-knit team does not just happen by itself; it takes some effort and some skill. Most kids excel in environments in which they feel needed and have a sense of belonging. SEE ARTICLE – TEAM BONDING; BUILDING YOUR BEST TEAM</p>
<b>Throwing Circle</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> For Players to learn different throws.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Divide Players into equal groups with at least 4 in each group. Players spread out 10 to 15 feet apart to form a circle.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Player throws ball to Player beside her using Backhand, Underhand, or Three Quarter throw. After a few times around the circle, reverse the direction.</p> <p><b>Variation:</b> Make it a competition between the circles. First circle to move the ball around 5 times using one of the throws, wins. The losers do <i>Stars</i>, crab walk, etc.</p>
<b>Top or Bottom</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Learn to be a disciplined hitter.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Player stands ready to hit. Coach is a few feet away to the side with 2 balls in 1 hand.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Coach soft tosses both balls at the same time out of the same hand and calls “Top” or “Bottom.” The Player then hits whichever position is called.</p> <p><b>Variation:</b> Used different colored balls and call out a color or have her never hit the red one.</p>
<b>Watch and Take Advantage</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> Learn to take advantage of mistakes in the Pitcher/Catcher exchange. Pitcher and Catcher learn to work together to hold runners, make good pitches, and good throws.</p> <p><b>Setup:</b> Line of Players at 1B (or 2B or 3B). Pitcher/Coach in the circle. Catcher/Coach behind Home.</p> <p><b>Execution:</b> Pitcher delivers the ball to the Catcher. Catcher fields the ball and returns it to the Pitcher. Player, based on a passed ball, poor return to the Pitcher, or a lack of the Pitcher/Catcher paying attention, takes a lead on the release and then steals 2B.</p>

**The Barney Bop**

The tools needed are a sturdy chair, a large stuffed toy (I use Barney, hence the name) and preferably a backstop or net to place behind the target.

Start by placing "Barney" in the chair and if needed, prop him up to get him about 3-4 feet off the ground and place the chair with Barney straddling 1st base.

Now divide your team up into two groups and have them line up in two columns at the shortstop position. Have the 1st player from Team 1 take the first play. Hit a grounder the player 1. She must cleanly field the ball and make a throw to 1st base trying to knock Barney out of the chair.

If this is done, her team scores one point. Then the 1st player from Team 2 takes the next play and does the same thing.

Do this until all of the players have had at least one turn. You can move the players from shortstop to 2nd base and do the same game.

I have also had the players set up out in the outfield and place the chair at 2nd base to teach a good throw to 2nd. Try to have some type of prize for the winning team, like not carrying the equipment or something like that.

**More Team Bonding****Balance Ball**

Divide the team into pairs. Each pair should sit on the ground with their backs touching and their legs outstretched. Place a softball between the backs of each pair. Instruct pairs to stand up without dropping the ball or touching it with their hands. Pairs must strategize and work together to complete the task as quickly as possible. In addition to strategizing, Balance Ball requires communication and a degree of lower body strength and athletic ability. After all pairs have stood up, discuss how important it was that each person moved at the same time as his partner to avoid letting the ball drop. Lead a discussion about the importance of communication and teamwork in accomplishing group goals, and then ask the group to come up with five team goals for the season. Write the goals and post them in a common area as a reminder throughout the year.

**Secrets Scrimmage**

Instruct all team members to take places in the infield and outfield. A coach or assistant coach should remain at home plate and hit fly balls to the players. When a player catches a ball, she must reveal a little-known fact about herself before she can release the ball. If the play is in the outfield, she then throws the ball to an infield player, who also must reveal a fact. The infield player can then return the ball to the hitter. Hit fly balls until each player has revealed a fact; rotate players into different positions so each one has a chance to share. The activity fosters a sense of trust and community while honing essential catching and throwing skills.

# **Sample Parents' Meeting Agenda**

## **Parents Package**

- 1) Roster
- 2) Rules
- 3) Uniform – decide on team color for pants
- 4) Schedule

## **1. A Little Bit About Myself**

## **2. My Coaching Philosophy**

## **3. Team Goals/Individual Goals**

## **4. Playing Time**

## **5. Team Rules**

- 5.1. Have fun.
- 5.2. Listen.
- 5.3. Bat in hand, helmet on your head
- 5.4. Timeliness
- 5.5. Etc.

## **6. Parent Rules**

## **7. Q&A**

