

DYA Rec Softball Coaches' Handbook

Coach Pitch

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.

Coach Pitch Skill Goals

COACH PITCH		
<u>SIDE OF BALL</u>	<u>POSITIONS(S)</u>	<u>SKILL</u>
Defense	Infield	Positioning
Defense	Infield	Ground Ball Fundamentals
Defense	Infield	Throwing
Defense	Infield	Fly Ball Fundamentals
Defense	Outfield	Positioning
Defense	Outfield	Ground Ball Fundamentals
Defense	Outfield	Fly Ball Fundamentals
Defense	Outfield	Cut offs
Offense	Baserunning	Leadoffs
Offense	Baserunning	Out of box
Offense	Hitting	Bunting
Offense	Sliding	Figure 4
Softball	Rules	Basic rules

Coach Pitch Practice Plans

Week 1

Equipment Needed

Bats, Softballs, Helmets, T, (Wiffle Balls if you have them)

First Aid Kit

Duration	Activities
10 min	Allow for Stragglers Intros Team Bonding Stretching and Conditioning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arm Circles • Jumping Jacks • Base Running Review • Run around Bases
15 min	Throwing and Catching
5 min	Water Break and <i>Team Bonding</i>
5 min	Infield and Outfield Positioning
20 min	Ground Ball Fundamentals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rotating Infield</i> • <i>Rotating Outfield with Ground Balls.</i>
5 min	Water Break and <i>Team Bonding</i>
25 min	Hitting Stations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft Toss • T • Coach Pitch
5 min	Rules: Strikes, Balls, Outs Team Bonding

Week 2

Equipment Needed

Bats, Softballs, Helmets, T, (Wiffle Balls if you have them), **Cardboard** (5-6ft long, 2-3ft wide),

Blanket

First Aid Kit

Duration	Activities
5 min	Allow for Stragglers Team Bonding Stretching and Conditioning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arm Circles • Jumping Jacks

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base Running Review • Run around Bases
10 min	Throwing and Catching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back and Forth • <i>Throwing Square</i>
5 min	Water Break and Team Bonding
20 min	Sliding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Figure 4</i> (Do this in the grass, with the blanket on the cardboard, and a HELMET)
10 min	Fly Ball Fundamentals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Drop Step and React</i> • <i>Killers</i>
5 min	Water Break and Team Bonding
30 min	Hitting Stations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft Toss • T • Coach Pitch
5 min	Rules: Foul Balls, Leading Off Team Bonding

Week 3

Equipment Needed

Bats, Softballs, Helmets, T, (Wiffle Balls if you have them), Cardboard, Blanket, Tennis or Racquet Balls
First Aid Kit

Duration	Activities
5 min	Allow for Stragglers Team Bonding Stretching and Conditioning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arm Circles • Jumping Jacks • Base Running Review • Run around Bases
20 min	Throwing and Catching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back and Forth • Grounders • Fly Balls
5 min	Water Break and Team Bonding
10 min	Baserunning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Out of the Box Race</i> • <i>Clank</i>

15 min	Sliding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Figure 4</i> (Do this at 2nd, with the blanket on the cardboard, and a HELMET)
5 min	Water Break and Team Bonding
25 min	Bunting Fundamentals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bunting</i> Hitting Stations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft Toss • Bunting • Coach Pitch
5 min	Team Bonding

Week 4

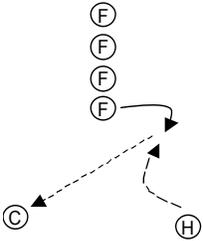
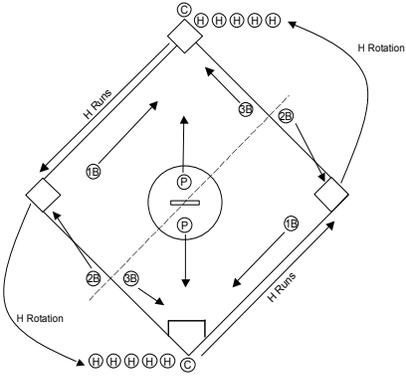
Equipment Needed

Bats, Softballs, Helmets, (Wiffle Balls if you have them), Tennis or Racquet Balls
First Aid Kit

Duration	Activities
5 min	Allow for Stragglers Team Bonding Stretching and Conditioning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arm Circles • Jumping Jacks • Base Running Review • Run around Bases
5 min	Throwing and Catching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back and Forth
15 min	Infield and Outfield Fundamentals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infield Positioning • Infield Fungos • Outfield Positioning • Outfield Fungos
5 min	Water Break and Team Bonding
10 min	Sliding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Figure 4</i> (Do this at 2nd with a HELMET)
5 min	Baserunning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules: Leadoffs • <i>Foul Line Leadoffs</i> • <i>Out of the Box Race</i>
10 min	Slingshot Pitch Fundamentals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Slingshot Pitch</i>
5 min	Water Break and Team Bonding

20 min	Hitting Stations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bunting • Soft Toss • Player Pitch
5 min	Team Bonding

Drill Glossary – for all divisions (alphabetical order)

<p>Around the Ball</p> 	<p>Purpose: Practice circling around the ball when catching fly balls.</p> <p>Setup: Line of Fielders. Fungo Hitter. Catcher offset from Hitter.</p> <p>Execution: 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>Bunt Around</p> 	<p>Purpose: Players work on bunting and the infield works on bunt defense.</p> <p>Setup: 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 3rd were 1st. 2 2Bs, 1 at the normal position, 1 in foul territory between 3rd and Home. 2 3Bs, 1 in normal position, the other inside the baseline between 1B and 2B.</p> <p>Execution: 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>Clank</p>	<p>Purpose: Practice running to different bases after a hit. Conditioning.</p> <p>Setup: Players form groups of 3 at Home. Coach has 2 bats at Home. Players in a line facing 1B.</p> <p>Execution: 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>

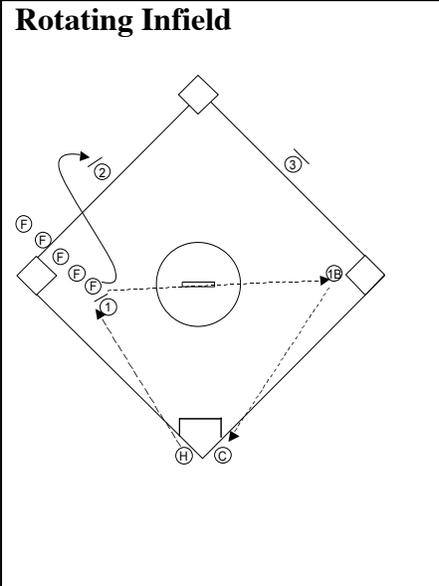
	<p>Variation: If your Players are ready to slide, have them slide into 2B and 3B.</p>
Covering	<p>Purpose: For adjacent outfielders to practice communication, taking an angle to the ball, and backing each other up.</p> <p>Setup: 2 lines of Players 40 feet apart. Coach and Catcher setup far enough away to hit fly balls.</p> <p>Execution: 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>
Crossfire	<p>Purpose: Learn to make and catch throws at different positions. Conditioning.</p> <p>Setup: Even lines of Players at 1B, 2B, SS, and 3B. Hitter on each side of Home with a Catcher beside each Hitter.</p> <p>Execution: 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>
Distance Throwing	<p>Purpose: For the Pitcher to learn to throw hard, focusing more on speed than accuracy.</p> <p>Setup: Mark points at 30, 45, and 60 feet. Pitchers and Catchers pair up.</p> <p>Execution: Pitcher throws 5 balls from 30 feet, then 45, then 60. Repeat.</p>
Drop Step and React	<p>Purpose: Learn that the first movement on a fly ball is backwards.</p> <p>Setup: Form as many lines as there are Coaches/Helpers.</p> <p>Execution: 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>
Figure 4	<p>Purpose: Learn a basic sliding approach and build Player confidence.</p> <p>Setup: 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>Execution: First Player in line runs towards the cardboard. As she is almost to the blanket, she kicks her unpadded leg out like she is kicking a ball, tucks her padded leg ankle under the knee pit of the unpadded leg, and extends her arms above her head as 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>Foul Line Leadoffs</p>	<p>Purpose: Practice leadoffs and steals.</p> <p>Setup: 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>Execution: 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>Getting Hit by a Pitch</p>	<p>Purpose: 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>Setup: Player with bat and helmet. Coach with bucket of tennis balls or softies 10 feet away.</p> <p>Execution: 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>Infield Loop</p>	<p>Note: This drill looks complicated but it’s not and once the players understand it is a lot of fun.</p> <p>Purpose: Make different throws to different bases and field different types of hits. Conditioning.</p> <p>Setup: Line of Players at 3B. Ball in circle. Player at 1B. Hitter and a Catcher.</p>

<p>Outfield Around</p>	<p>Purpose: Practice fielding all types of hits and throwing to different bases. Conditioning.</p> <p>Setup: Line of Fielders in RF. Base Players depending on the Round. Fungo Hitter and Catcher.</p> <p>Execution:</p> <p>Round 1</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ground Ball. Throw to 1B. Run to CF 2. Fly Ball. Throw to 3B. Run to LF. 3. Fly Ball. Throw to H. <p>Round 2</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ground Ball. Throw to 3B. Run to CF. 2. Ground Ball. Throw to H. Run to LF. 3. Fly Ball. Run to H. <p>Round 3</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fly Ball. Throw to H. Run to CF. 2. Fly Ball. Throw to 3B. 3. Ground Ball. Run to 2B. Throw to H. <p>After the final throw of the Round, the Player runs around H to the end of the line in RF.</p>
<p>Pickoffs with Hula Hoop</p>	<p>Purpose: For the Catcher to learn to throw to a location.</p> <p>Setup: Catcher behind Home in full gear. Coach/Pitcher in the circle. Hula Hoop stood up or held up at 2B/3B.</p> <p>Execution: 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>
<p>Pickoffs with Trash Can</p>	<p>Purpose: For the Catcher to learn to throw to a more focused location.</p> <p>Setup: Catcher behind Home in full gear. Coach/Pitcher in the circle. Trash can on its side at 2B/3B.</p> <p>Execution: 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>
<p>Relay Race</p>	<p>Purpose: Practice relays and making accurate throws.</p> <p>Setup: Players form groups of 3 and stand 30 feet apart.</p>

Execution: 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.

Variation: Make it a competition between groups. The losing groups do *Stars*, crab walk, etc.

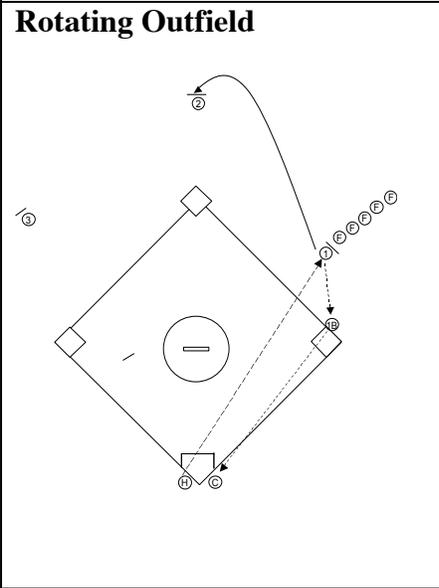


Purpose: Learn to make throws to 1B from each position in the infield and work on ground ball fundamentals.

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.



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.

	<p>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.</p>
Bunting	<p>Purpose: Learn the most basic bunt.</p> <p>Setup: Player with bat and helmet. Coach/Partner several feet directly in front of the Player.</p> <p>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 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>
Square Catch	<p>Purpose: To learn to turn the feet in the direction the Player is throwing</p> <p>Setup: 4 Players stand in a square, at a throwing distance apart.</p> <p>Execution: Players throw the ball around the square in one direction 5 times then reverse the direction for 5 times</p> <p>Variation: Make it a competition between multiple squares. The losing squares do <i>Stars</i>, crab walk, etc.</p>
Stars	<p>Purpose: Fun conditioning</p> <p>Setup: Players spread out enough so they can't kick each other.</p> <p>Execution: 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>
Throwing Circle	<p>Purpose: For Players to learn different throws.</p> <p>Setup: 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>Execution: 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>Variation: 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>

<p>Top or Bottom</p>	<p>Purpose: Learn to be a disciplined hitter.</p> <p>Setup: Player stands ready to hit. Coach is a few feet away to the side with 2 balls in 1 hand.</p> <p>Execution: 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>Variation: Used different colored balls and call out a color or have her never hit the red one.</p>
<p>Watch and Take Advantage</p>	<p>Purpose: 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>Setup: Line of Players at 1B (or 2B or 3B). Pitcher/Coach in the circle. Catcher/Coach behind Home.</p> <p>Execution: 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.

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

