

5 Youth Baseball Drills

Two Hand Toss Hitting Drill

Setup

- The coach will be kneeling or sitting around 10-12 feet away from the hitter on a 45-degree angle with a bucket of balls. The coach will start with one ball in each hand. The hitter will be set up in his normal stance facing a net. For safety reasons, you may want to use whiffle balls for this drill. Even better, have the coach sit behind a screen for protection.

Execution

- The goal of this drill to work on the sequence of the swing - separating the stride and the swing especially.
- To begin each repetition, the coach will bring his left hand forward and his right hand back. This is the cue for the hitter to take his stride. Then, the coach reverses the position of his hands (bringing the left hand back and right hand forward) and soft tosses the ball to the hitter with his right hand. The batter will then swing and make contact into the net.

Complete 25 reps.

Coaching Tips

- Start by bringing the right hand back very slowly and deliberately, waiting for the stride, then coming forward and releasing the ball. This will separate the stride and swing dramatically, into two separate motions.
- As the hitter gets the hang of it, you can speed up the transition and make the entire swing sequence more fluid.

SHOW 1ST BALL -



STRIDE TOSS 2ND BALL – SWING



Baserunning Sequence Drill

Setup

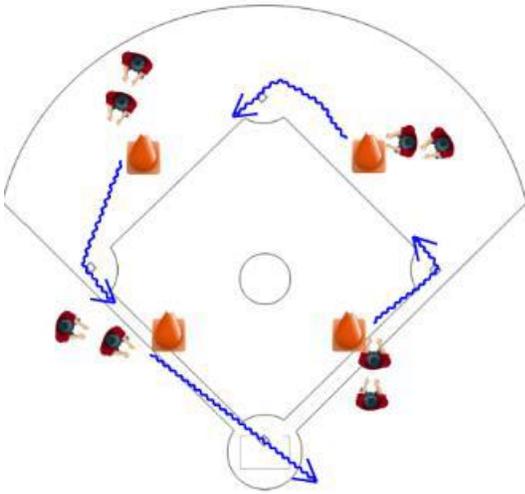
- Divide your team into 4 groups. Station each group at a point halfway down each baseline.
- Group 1 halfway between home and first
- Group 2 halfway between first and second
- Group 3 halfway between second and third
- Group 4 halfway between third and home

Execution

- The drill begins with the player at the front of each line proceeding to the next base, then executing a turn using the proper fundamentals. He then advances to the next line, going from first base, to second base, to third base to home.
- There are four phases to this drill:
 - 1.Walk through
 - 2.Jog through (approximately half speed)
 - 3.Run through at three quarter speed
 - 4.Run through at full speed
- Note: start at phase 1 and do not proceed to the next phase until the players have demonstrated the proper fundamentals.

Coaching Tips

- Try to tag the inside corner of the base with the left foot. But don't change your running rhythm in order to do this. (Over time, the left foot tag will become more natural)
- To make the turn, throw the left arm across the chest and turn the shoulders to the right, while the hips and feet turn to the left (the direction of the next base)
- To help your players remember to this, place a coach behind the bag, and have them reach across their bodies with the left arm and touch his chest as they make the turn
- Try to "run in a square" and cut towards each base on the sharpest possible angle



Learning The Four Seam Grip

Setup

- Line your fielders up facing you, each one with a ball and a glove.

Execution

- A proper four-seam grip generates backspin and allows the ball to fly straight and true, and is the preferred throwing grip for all fielders. Demonstrate the proper four-seam grip as follows:
 - Take the middle and index fingers of your throwing hand, and place them perpendicular to the horseshoe of the seams on the baseball. The "horseshoe seam" should face into your ring finger of your throwing hand.
 - NOTE: It's called the horseshoe seam simply because the seam itself looks like the shape of a horseshoe.
 - Next, place your thumb directly beneath the baseball, resting on the smooth leather. Ideally, you should rest your thumb in the center of the horseshoe seam on the bottom part of the baseball.
 - Grip the ball softly, like an egg, in your fingertips. There should be a "gap" or space between the ball and your palm. This is the key to making a good, hard four-seam throw

with maximum backspin and velocity. A loose grip minimizes "friction" between your hand and the baseball. The less friction, of course, the quicker the baseball can leave your hand.

- Have the players practice the grip with their eyes open, then with their eyes closed. Over time, they will develop a muscle memory and "feel" for the ball, which will allow them to establish the proper four-seam grip in just a split second.
- Once they have the grip down, separate them into pairs, facing each other, around 20-30 feet apart. Practice catching the ball, establishing the four-seam grip, then throwing it back to your partner.

Coaching Tips

- Always establish the grip before pulling the ball out of the glove. Do not allow your players to fiddle with the grip as they cock back to throw, as this is a major cause of bobbled balls and costly errors.

Outfield Ground Ball Fielding Drill

Setup

- The outfielders will line up single file in the outfield-facing home plate. A coach stands at home plate (or the edge of the infield) with a fungo bat and balls. An additional coach or player stands to the side to receive throws from the fielders.

Execution

- The coach will hit a ground ball to the first player in the outfielders line. The outfielder will charge hard at the ball, breakdown, field the ball using the Knee Method, Semi-Knee Method or Pro Method, then make an accurate throwback to home plate. The coach will then hit a ground ball to the next player, as the first player rotates to the back of the line.

Coaching Tips

- The **Knee Method** is typically taught to young players as the safest and most reliable way to field a ground ball in the outfield. You can also use this technique when there are no runners on base, when the ground is very bumpy, or when there is no chance of throwing a runner out.
- The outfielder should charge the ball hard for the first 4 or 5 steps, then decrease his speed, get under control, and break down to field the ball.
- To field the ball, drop to the throwing side knee (the right knee for right handed players) and put the back of the glove flat on the ground between the legs. Watch the ball into the glove, trap it with the throwing hand, then rise up and step into the throw.
- The outfielder should center his body in front of the ball, so he can block it if it takes a bad hop.
- The **Semi-Knee Method** is a faster, but slightly riskier way to field a outfield grounder. The technique is the same as the Knee Method, except the outfielder will only drop the throwing-side knee halfway to the ground while fielding the ball. This will allow him to move into his throwing motion more quickly, and have a better chance at throwing out a runner
- The **Pro Method** (or Scoop Method) is the riskiest way to field an outfield grounder and should be used only in situations where the game will be lost if the fielder doesn't get the ball in quickly.

This technique is for a do-or-die situation in which the tying or winning run is attempting to score and the outfielder must make a quick throw to the infield. The outfielder runs at the ball and scoops it up while on the move, placing the glove to the outside of the glove-side leg.

KNEE METHOD



SEMI KNEE METHOD



PRO METHOD



Dry Run Pitching Drill

Goal

- To help pitchers understand and develop the phases of the pitching motion, in a slow, controlled manner that allows the coach to make adjustments and corrections.

Setup

- Line up your pitchers facing the coach with about 4-5 feet of space between them. They will wear gloves but do not need a ball for this drill.

Execution

- Take your pitchers through each phase of the pitching motion one by one, stopping at the end of each phase to make adjustments and corrections.

Phase 1: Stance

- The pitcher's weight should be evenly distributed on both feet
- Eyes should be facing the target
- The glove should be palm up and the throwing hand palm down to conceal the ball

Phase 2: Pivot and Balance

- Take a short "rocker step" with the stride foot (glove side foot) that goes backward, away from the rubber
- The step should be short, and compact so the pitcher's head remains over the ball side foot.
- Following the rocker step, the pivot foot (ball side foot) will square off parallel to the rubber
- Bring the stride leg up into a controlled motion to transfer the pitcher's weight into the pivot leg
- Hold the "balance" position with the stride leg up and balance until the coach says stop

STANCE



ROCKER STEP & PIVOT



BALANCE POSITION



Phase 3: Separation and Stride

- After the stride leg reaches its highest point of elevation, the pitcher will separate his hands in a thumbs down position, while beginning his stride toward home plate

- Perform a controlled "fall" towards home plate, with the head, glove side knee, elbow and shoulder leading the way
- Make sure to keep a firm back pivot leg, rather than collapsing it down into a "drop and drive" motion. This will help pitchers keep the ball release point high, and develop pitches that travel on a downward plane toward the hitter
- Upon foot strike of the stride leg, the arms and body should form a "T" position. Minimize stress on the stride leg by landing with a bent knee.

Phase 4: Release and follow through

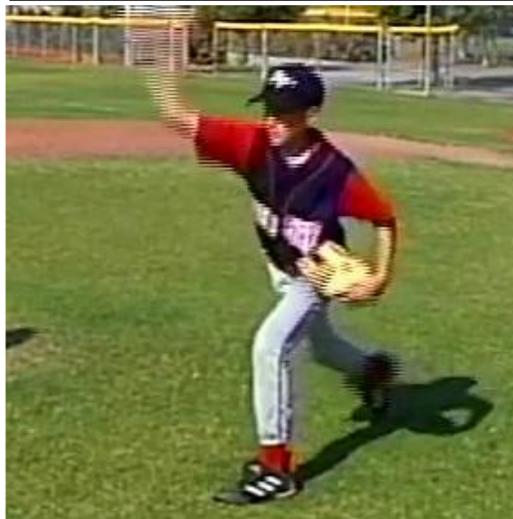
- After achieving the "T" position, the throwing shoulder will accelerate explosively toward the plate for the release and follow through
- The pitcher's head should move to directly over the stride leg, while the throwing shoulder, arms and upper torso extend toward home plate
- As the throwing arm moves forward, the throwing elbow should be even or slightly higher than the throwing shoulder
- The elbow snaps to full extension
- The wrist should be straight and firm, while the fingers stay on top of the ball
- The pivot foot heel rotates up and out, then comes off the rubber to complete the weight transfer from the back foot to the front foot

Progress through each of the phases one by one, providing corrections and adjustments along the way. Once the player is comfortable, with phase 1, have them complete phase 1 and 2 together, then stop. Then add phase 3 and stop. Then add phase 4 to create the complete pitching delivery.

SEPARATION & STRIDE



RELEASE



FOLLOW THROUGH

