

Simsbury Little League Fastpitch Coaches' Drills & Other Resources



Simsbury Little League Fastpitch Softball

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Throwing Fundamentals Simsbury Little League FastPitch Softball

At all levels of Simsbury Little League FastPitch Softball, coaches are encouraged to teach a consistent methodology in the core skills of Throwing and Hitting. Those fundamentals are supported by the detailed drills defined below which should be included in every practice. Executed efficiently, these drills can be accomplished in 20 minutes at the beginning of practice.

Warm-Ups, Throwing

1. All players begin on one knee (throwing hand side), facing their partner, about 10 feet apart. Throwing elbow is extended in the direction of the partner, ball in hand, glove hand under, and supporting throwing elbow at a 90 degree angle. With a flick of the wrist, player throws ball to the partner, focusing on correct 12 to 6 o'clock ball rotation. This is a wrist throw only, no arm. 15-20 reps.
2. Still Kneeling, players move 10 yards apart and begin a full-motion throw. Fingers on the throwing hand begin at the hip (fingers by the thigh). Arm rotates back, bringing ball over the head (elbow up high). Player brings the arm straight over the top of the shoulder (fingers to the sky). Finally, player pulls down through the ball, focusing on 12 to 6 o'clock rotation (wave bye-bye). Wrist is straight and follow through continues down through the body. 20-30 reps.
3. Players should make all catches with 2 hands, concentrating on the exchange between glove hand and throwing hand.
4. Players should now stand up and begin throwing from a standing position. Key to the continued development of players is encouraging them to focus on every throw. Part of making good throws is footwork and, at the upper levels, players should be instructed on how to move their feet to position themselves to catch the ball on the throwing side of the body, so a quick return throw can be made. Additionally, setting the feet in position to throw should be emphasized so balance is maintained. At the upper levels, players should move back 5 steps every 15-20 throws.



5. For the older players, it is important to remember that there is a difference between infield throws and outfield throws. Once players move to about 30 yards apart, focus should be on including a crow-hop step and a full circle arm rotation to take pressure off the shoulder and enable longer throws.
6. Once players are throwing from 30-40 yards, you may want to move them directly into a relay throw drill with players positioned in lines of three. Start all teams with throws from the same end, player in the middle serves as relay between the players on either end. Concentrate on setting glove targets and body positioning to facilitate quick turn and relay throw.
7. You can complete this drill with a “relay race” game where 3-man teams compete to complete a set number of relay throws.



HITTING CONDITIONING PROGRAM (adapted from the video “Power & Distance w/ Mark Eldridge)

DRILL	DESCRIPTION	REPS
1. Rhythm Swings	Assume normal stance. Swing gently, making sure back foot pivots and hips rotate so belly button faces forward. At end of swing, without stopping, reverse direction, including hips and feet. Continue this back and forth, without stopping. PURPOSE: Warm-up	20
2. Hip Isolation	Place bat behind back, bracing with elbows with barrel of bat on correct side as if you were hitting. Take normal swing, keeping trunk upright (do not lunge). Start swing with back foot. Throw belly button toward pitcher, keeping head centered and eyes level. Shoulders and upper body should be relaxed. PURPOSE: Isolate lower body and trunk.	20
3. One Knee Swings	Kneel on back side knee (right knee for righties, left for lefties) with front leg out of way so as not to hit it with bat. Assume normal batting position, and take swing. Make sure shoulders and arms stay relaxed and loose. Choke up on bat as needed. Focus on proper hand/arm movement. PURPOSE: Isolate upper body.	20
4. Take Drill	Assume normal stance with bat, ready position. Player pretends pitch is thrown, takes short stride, keeps hands and weight back, and takes pitch. Hands should stay back, avoiding forward lunge of body. DRILL: Have another person say “ready and take” – take pitch or “ready and hit”- swing at pitch. PURPOSE: Learning to keep weight and hands back.	20
5. Change Up Drill	Similar to take drill however pitch is a change up. Short stride, partial pivot of back foot, hand stay back, then swing. Keep hands back, head between feet (no lunging). PURPOSE: Staying back on changeups.	20
6. Tempo Swings	Assume normal stance. Swing bat at 50% effort 10 times, with good mechanics each swing. Then, swing full, 10 times with good mechanics. Finally, swing 10 more times as hard as you can without losing balance and maintaining good mechanics. Exhale as you swing. Make sure to keep shoulders and arms relaxed (don’t tense up, grip the bat too hard). PURPOSE: Conditioning.	30
7. Zone Hitting	Set up tee for the 9 areas of the hitting zone as shown below. Make sure batter stays in same location of batters box after adjusting tee. PURPOSE: Hitting all areas of strike zone.	90

8.

INSIDE HIGH	MIDDLE HIGH	OUTSIDE HIGH
INSIDE	MIDDLE	OUTSIDE
INSIDE LOW	MIDDLE LOW	OUTSIDE LOW



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Simsbury Little League Fastpitch Drills “Coach Swap”

TBall Division

The Fence Game

1st you separate the players into 2 teams. 1 team is batting and the other team is running. Have a coach pitch to the girls or you can use a tee for younger players. The team batting will have the 1st player up and the other team will have 2 girls holding the backstop fence. The coach pitches and as soon as the ball is hit the 2 girls will run the ball down and touch it in the meantime the batter will be running the bases. The batter has to see how far they can get before both players running touch the ball. Continue this for all batters on that team then switch teams once you go through the 1st teams lineup. Tally up the runs to see which team wins.

Bare-handed, players roll a ball back and forth slowly on a roll and field the ball in front of them.

They bring the ball up into their bodies and ready themselves to throw. (I explain that as a receiver catching a ball in a drill, you don't just stop, you turn up-field and run) 20-30 reps, 20 -30 backhands, and then throw on a glove and do it again!

I have the girls call out the names of the player they are throwing to, to help assist getting to know their team mates.

Dinner Time

Use cooking mitts. Have your players field ground balls with the mitts instead of their gloves. It gets them to watch the ball roll into the mitts, use soft hands, and make a throw. Playing 'hot potato' with your outfielders....teaches them to think fast and get the ball, but to get rid of it quickly.

Hit the Bucket

Put bucket at 1st base about 20--25 feet from your players. Put a line in the dirt. In turn, each player steps to the line and gets in ready position. Throw a ground ball to them. And have them stop the ball and throw and try to hit the bucket. If they hit the bucket with a throw, they would get a prize of your choosing (candy, water breaks, etc.)



Place the prize on top of the bucket so the kids can see it. The first 2 players to hit the bucket win. With a prize at stake, the kids will really focus on hitting the bucket.

Nerf Ball

While pitching to my TWIN T-Ballers in our backyard, one of the boys was having more trouble than the other trying to hit our baseball sized whiffle balls. While gathering up all the balls that one had hit around our yard, I grabbed an old nerf soccer ball (that is slightly bigger than a softball) in the corner of the yard. I started pitching this to my boys and both of them were making consistent contact. After a handful of tosses, I switched back to the whiffle balls and my son that was having trouble hitting the whiffle balls before, was basically 100% better. His hand eye coordination was much improved.

I've since gone to Target and spent \$15 bucks on 5 of these small nerf soccer balls and have used them at our t-ball practices as we're transitioning to "coach pitch" for the 2nd half of the season. All 13 of my kids are making consistent contact on the 1st or 2nd pitch during our games.

Tickle the Grass

To get our t-batters fielding ground balls, I start them off with no glove. I have them "tickle the grass" with their fingertips so they get the notion that their hands need to be low in order to scoop up the ball. Once they get "tickle the grass," I can toss them some tennis balls. They generally get the idea fast. Then, it's gloves on, and they move on to fielding balls on even terrain (concrete or dirt infield).

Hold the Line

A great way I have found to teach tee ballers to run up on and get in front of the ball when fielding grounders is to draw a line in the dirt and have the player stand a few feet back from it. Once the ball is hit or rolled to them, their task is to run up and stop the ball before it reaches the line. After a few tries I move the line closer to me so they must progressively move further forward to stop the ball before it reaches the line.

Throwing Accuracy Drill

Line all the kids up on the pitching mound. Put a tee with a ball on it on home plate. Give the kids 3 or 4 chances (depending on amount of kids) to hit the ball off the tee with another ball. Even if they hit the ball holder on the tee or the tee stand, it shows accuracy and should be rewarded. Kids standing in line should watch and pay attention. Kids that don't pay attention will lose one of their chances to hit the ball. Give a prize next practice @ water break for those kids that hit the ball off the tee. Like a



Gatorade or a new baseball or anything you desire. A note pad is handy for keeping track of those kids that lose turns and who hit the ball off the tee. Younger players move up closer to home plate if needed. Kids love to win things.

Fastpitch Relay

Have some players line up behind second base the rest behind home plate. The players at home each have a ball the coach says balls hit and they player at home runs to second base and hands off the ball and the second base player runs to home. To start each runner the coach says balls hit.

This is a great way for the kids to run off some energy and learn base running.

Tiggle Bats (contributed by Peter Gailey)

Place the knobs of two bats in the chain link fence, allowing them to dangle down in front of the fence. Draw a line at home plate. Form two lines of players on each side of home plate, facing the fence, far enough away from each other to provide safety. The first player in each line takes one step up to the line and throws the ball, trying to hit the bat in the fence on her side of home plate. Once the ball bounces off the fence, the player runs in, fields the ball and rolls it back to the next player in line who takes one step up to the line and throws the ball at the dangling bat. Players score 1 point for hitting the bat, 3 points for knocking it off of the fence. Players lose one point for stepping in front of the line to throw. Make this a competition. The kids love it.



Simsbury Little League Fastpitch Drills “Coach Swap”

Farm A Division

Tick-step-tock (Contributed by Lisa Daly)

Learning the fundamental steps of the fastpitch softball pitching motion cannot begin too early. This drill introduces players to the basic steps in a fun way.

Have your players line up facing the backstop. Have them stand with their feet together, hands in front of their bellies, one hand in the glove, the other holds the ball. When you call “Tick”, have the players swing both of their arms straight back past their hips and hold them there. When you say “step”, have each player take a step forward with her left foot (right foot for lefties). When you call “Tock”, have them swing their right hand forward, releasing the ball toward the backstop.

This drill is best done step by step without the ball until the players can put the three steps together smoothly.

Windshield Wiper

First of all we use no glove and use a tennis ball. I have them hold their glove hand up at 12:00 and the other hand behind their back. Feet are to remain planted. Explain that the hand is like a windshield wiper, it goes side to side but never twist or turn. Then I throw, throw, throw, and then throw some more balls to them opposite side the body of the glove hand. I don't ask them to catch the ball, just to stop it. Without the glove they are not tempted to turn the glove the wrong way in order for the ball to fall in.

Fingers to the Sky



I use a soccer or volley ball and have a coach toss the ball to the player some at waist or below and some from waist up. The player then has to yell “Fingers to the sky”, if the ball is over their head or “Fingers to the ground” if it is below their waist and catch the ball using two hands.

This accomplishes a few things:

1. It gets players to think of where do my hands go depending where the ball is.
2. The ball is bigger than their mitt so they have to use both hands and catch the ball with soft hands as well as having the face of the glove facing the incoming ball.
3. By saying fingers to the sky, fingers to the ground it puts the mitt in the open and correct position to catch a ball. You can alter this once they start to get more comfortable and start using a softball and/or baseball. If they go back to using stiff arms and one hand or backhanding ball right at them you switch back to bigger ball.

Intro to Sliding

When I teach sliding practice to young kids I use a piece of cardboard to soften the blow. Kids like it too because they learn to hit the piece of cardboard in a certain spot (outside or inside the bag and the correct distance before the bag). I also trace out my sons correct body position on the cardboard to show the correct type of slide. The cardboard also seems to slide pretty well on the grass and I have very few injuries/strawberries.

Baserunning Relay

Split up the girls and put 1/2 on 2nd base and 1/2 at home - One team against the other. Everyone takes 1 trip around as fast as they can and when returning to their starting place the next one goes. 1st team done wins. Each person must touch every base.

The Black Tape Drill

Take a piece of electric tape and tape one strip all the way around the softball. Have the girls kneel on the knee of their throwing arm, facing their partner. When they start the drill, they put their thumb and middle finger along the tape. The ball faces away from the partner, while the glove points to the partner.(like showing their wing span) They throw from one knee, concentrating on trying to have the tape spin straight. If they throw it correctly, they should see the strip of tape the entire way to their target....not a black blurr.

Weight Back

Here's one I use for the younger set to get the idea of keeping their weight back when hitting. I alternate having the hitter raise the front foot off the ground after their stride/step, before I soft toss



them a pitch. They then rotate their hips forward, put the front foot down, hands to ball, and follow through.

Hitting Focus

Here is a drill that I do with my team that has increased the percentage of making contact with the softball. Take the normal soft toss with wiffle balls, but instead of using a baseball bat, use a broomstick or something even smaller that is as sturdy. This allows the hitter to focus on the ball and hit the middle of the ball. Then I take the same stick and ball and soft toss two balls and make them hit the one that I call out. This allows them to concentrate on the task at hand. Focus on the ball.

Turbo Ball

Divide your squad into two teams, you will need a softball, a field, a bucket and about five cones. The only set up will be to put the bucket on top of home plate and the cones to mark your boundary line (gray area for a bunt). The purpose is to make a shot into the bucket without stepping into the gray area. The team with the most buckets wins...The fun part and the workout is this...the coach throws or hits the ball anywhere fair on the field and the players have to retrieve it, throw and catch to their teammates to eventually get as close to the boundary line to take a shot. I give them a two step rule so they get rid of the ball. If the team drops the pass/throw or makes a bad throw, its a turnover. This game becomes competitive, good cardio, and works on throws/catch. Try it!

Bop the Coach

One of the drills I like to use is a tee at home plate and plastic balls. We put the tee at home plate and have one of the coaches sit on a bucket maybe about 15 feet away. We tell the kids to try and hit coach on the bucket (coach sitting on the bucket rags kids ie. "common you can't hit me") The kids really concentrate on going up the middle/throwing hands out without even knowing it.

Go and Throw

One drill we work on for throwing is I put X's with colored tape on the fence for each girl. I set a ball down about 15 feet away. The girls have to take a running start, pick the ball up, throw it at the X, with the goal being to hit the X. We usually make a game out of it and the first one to 10 wins a piece of bubblegum. This works on accurate throwing and continuous fielding. I have some young girls who will field the ball great but by the time they get set and throw the ball the runner has made it to the bag. Tip: For my 8U team we turn many drills into games and use bubblegum as a reward. It is cheap and my girls will stay focused for 1 1/2 hours of practice.

Climb the Cones



The drill my team likes is the one where you line 6 cones up on the first base line and 6 cones up on the third base line about 5 to 8 feet apart. Have the girls get in two lines at home plate (one on each base path) and throw to each other. If they both catch it, they move to the next set of cones a little further apart and so on until they reach the end. If either of the girls misses the ball, they both go to the back of the line.

Bucket Ball

With the girls lined up at shortstop and two coaches at first base we dump out a bucket of balls near the pitcher's mound. We then set the bucket by the coach at first base. The girls must run up one at a time and bare hand the ball and throw to first. Every good throw gets put back in the bucket and with every bad throw another coach puts three more balls out for the girls. They must move fast and make all good throws to get rid of all the balls.

Wood Ball

We start practice with the players facing a partner. Each has a piece of wood in one hand, playing catch at a short distance. We slowly move back as we speed up the transition from the wood to our hand. When the kids get started the ball bounces off of the wood and only a few kids can even catch it. After a while the kids are pulling the ball from the wood with very little contact. We then jump right into quick catch with our gloves. Before you know it everyone is a SS or 2B turning double plays up the middle.

Double Tee

I have trouble getting them to understand some basic swing mechanics (primarily dropping their back shoulder and elbow and swinging up versus down and through the ball. The drill we use to make them aware and improve their swing plane is a tee drill. I have a tee with multiple tee placements. I place two of the tees in line with each other. The back tee is approximately 1" higher than the front tee. I place a ball on the front tee and ask them to swing and hit a ground ball or low line drive. This makes them concentrate on swinging down and through the ball. If they resort to their old swing they will hit the back tee and receive immediate feedback of the flaw.

Ducky Down

I have 14 players so we divided up into two groups of 7 (or you could divide them up around your infield) and lined them up at second and third bases. I put a 14" stuffed yellow duck on top of a ball bucket with a lid. From off to the side of home plate I hit hard and soft grounders for the girls to run up on and field. They then had to make an accurate throw hard enough to knock the duck off the bucket. They don't want to quit when we do this.

3 Team Game

Another thing I do is divide my team into 3 small teams. The outfield is team one, infield (do not include pitcher and catcher) is team two. The other players are team three (these I switch out with



pitcher and catcher after they have hit) Team 3 are my first batters and we play 6 runs or 3 outs- Each girl gets 5 pitches (no More) and there are no walks. (This is also coached pitched ball). This makes them really watch the balls and try to hit anything that is remotely close. It also helps them to realize that even though the other "team" is batting that these kids are still their teammates and also their friends. The competition is just for that one hour. I have seen some girls who carry on the conflict even months afterwards.

When we do this drill- I also encourage the parents to be yelling and screaming -trying to distract the girls- because that is what a real game is like. We try to make the practices as much like a real game situation as possible with the exception that we are able to stop play and make corrections or give instruction as needed.

Simsbury Little League Fastpitch Drills “Coach Swap”

AA Division

Popcorn

I have my girls stand in pairs. One girl has three balls in her hand and the other gets ready to catch the pop flies. The girl throws the other a popup. As soon as the first one is caught the next one is in the air in the opposite direction. You can't let any of them hit the ground. After a little while they can throw the balls a little quicker. My girls like to make it a competition to see who can do it the longest before they let a ball hit the ground. This helps them with changing their direction and judgment of how deep the ball is going.

3 in 1

Hit a grounder or line drive at an infielder and have fielder make the throw to the catcher. Your catcher tosses out a short bunt in front of the plate so that the infielder has to keep charging. As soon as the infielder fields the bunt and tosses it to the catcher, throw (or hit) a pop fly back out so the infielder has to catch it over her shoulder or head.

Fill the Bucket

Split your team in half. One half goes to shortstop, the other half to the second base position. Place an empty ball bucket on second base. One coach stands between home and first in foul territory and another coach stands between third and home in foul territory. Each coach has the same number of balls as each team has players. The Coach on the first base line hits a ball to shortstop at the same time the coach on the third base line hits a ball to second base. Each player fields their ball and runs to



second base to drop it in the bucket. Coaches cannot hit another ball until the player has placed the ball in the bucket. First team to field all of their balls, and place them in the bucket, wins.

Back Foot Soft Toss

Assuming grip is correct and stance is solid, have the hitter pick up lead foot and balance on back foot. Coach will present ball high and drop it low to toss. At the bottom of the toss hitter takes stride keeping weight back and head from moving. Swing away! Even beginning hitters will get immediate feedback.

Footprints

Even older kids have a hard time understanding the term "circle the ball and catch the ball out in front and just inside of your glove hand. So I take some thin rubber and cut out five or six left and right feet. I place them on the ground to show them the direction they should take when circling the ball. Then I place a ball on the ground in front and just inside of the forward foot and make them go through the drill several times to get them used to getting their butts down and their gloves open with both hands down on the ground to scoop up the ball.

Popcorn Bunt Drill

One of the hardest things for young players is to learn to "watch" the ball hit the bat rather than swinging or moving the bat to the ball. We like to start youngsters out with a soft toss involving popcorn seeds. Talk about concentration, it takes considerable effort to watch that kernel in mid-air and follow it to the bat. After a few dozen kernels, the softballs become huge targets that are much easier to follow to the bat.

Orange Juice Batting Drill

Sometimes, girls hit hard off the tee and with hitting stick but when soft tossed or pitched to, they only take a half strength swing. The problem is that they are so worried about hitting the ball that their strength and speed are not incorporated into the swing. I like to have the girls hit fruit. I will pitch oranges at them instead of softballs. It is very surprising how hard they will swing to destroy an orange. I also toss large grapes at them to help improve their hand/eye coordination. Clean up is a bit of a mess but they learned how hard we want them to swing.

Heads Up



One of the drills I work with my softball team is a basic drill that involves 2 players. I have the players face each other, I then have them stand about eight feet apart. One player will turn and face away, the other player will hold the softball and toss it high in the air. Once the ball is in the air, the player that tossed the ball tells the other player to turn around. The player turns around and begins to look in the air for the ball. This drill has improved my players with hand eye coordination and catching the ball. We call this toss-up.

Tennis Anyone?

Yesterday at practice I used a tennis racket and tennis balls to work on fly balls to the outfielders and pop ups for infielders...This is a great drill because you can get a lot more work done in a shorter period of time...It absolutely forces the girls to use two hands because the tennis ball will usually bounce out if not caught with two hands...

Football Toss

Line the players up on the 3rd base line. On "go" the next girl in line runs and I throw the ball out in front of them as if a football quarterback throws to a wide receiver. This allows the girl to "run under it" instead of it coming "straight at them". This is much less intimidating for them. They go to IT instead of it coming AT THEM. Once they run across left to right I do the same thing right to left, increasing the distance and height of the ball on each pass. The distance increases and their confidence grows. Pretty soon they are catching them high and deep.

Pre-Game Hitting

Using a four station approach, effective pre-game batting practice can be completed in about 20 minutes. The stations can be spread out along a foul line in the outfield. One coach, plus 12 golf ball size and 24 softball size yellow wiffle balls are required.

Divide the team into four groups of three or four players. In each group, the players will rotate from pitcher to catcher to batter to shagger (if there are only three players in a group, eliminate the catcher). The balls are thrown underhanded from a short distance (approximately 20 feet). Balls are thrown with speed to simulate the pitches of the game. Little time is given between pitches so batters concentration must be maintained and the drill moves along rapidly.

Station 1— bunting. The 12 golf ball size wiffle balls are used here so that batters must concentrate to be successful. Players are to execute the various bunts the team employs. Execution is an absolute must here. If a player does not successfully bunt eight out of 12 pitches, she remains at this station and bunts again. The coach should remain close to this station and see that concentration is at a maximum.



Station 2 — inside part of the plate. Eight softball size wiffle balls are used. Pitches are thrown to the inside part of the plate. Hitters using good mechanics and a short compact swing concentrate to locate the contact point in front of the lead shoulder. The coach should look for a short and soft stride, a closed front side, staying back on the ball and a strong rear foot pivot. It is essential that the hitters are not pulling off the ball to make contact. Crisp, firm line drives are the goal.

Station 3 — middle third of the plate. Eight softball size wiffle balls are used. Pitches are thrown toward the middle of the plate. Again, using good mechanics, the goal is to drive the ball back toward the pitcher, toward the middle of the diamond. Stress line drives or ground balls and not long lazy flies. Hitters concentrate on the contact point, which is closer to the front shoulder than for the inside pitch.

Station 4 — outside part of the plate. Eight softball size wiffle balls are used. Contact point is now deeper in the strike zone. The coach should be sure that the batter's front side stays closed longer and the hitter stays on the ball, that good mechanics are maintained and she lets the ball get deep into the strike zone. The aim is to hit the ball on a line or on the ground to the opposite field. To accomplish this, hitters must hit down on the ball. Hitters should aim at the second base position if they are right handed and the shortstop position if they hit from the left side of the plate.

At least three balls should be grounded to the right side by right handed hitters (a necessary technique to score runs). Concentrate on the contact point! Keeping the concentration of the players high and moving them rapidly from one station to the other, coaches can make better use of the 20 minutes for pregame batting practice. Give this method a try. I think you will like it.

Wall Ball

Have a player stand about 8-10 feet from a cement wall. Incrediballs work best for this drill. Have another player stand behind the player and throw balls over the players shoulder at the wall. Players react to and field the ball. The closer the player stands to the wall, the quicker the reaction required.

Baby Bop

One of the most fun end of practice fielding and throwing drills is to set up a target on top of an old stool or batting tee at 1st base. The girl's favorite target so far is a "Baby Bop" (Barney's green friend) stuffed animal. The girls line up at SS or 3rd base and the coach hits the first fielder in line a ground ball. If the girl fields the ball cleanly she gets to continue to throw and try and knock over the stuffed animal on first. If the ball is booted the girl must throw the ball back to the hitter without throwing at the target and goes back to the end of the line. The girls really get into it and have fun at the same time they are sharpening their fundamentals!

Bermuda Triangle

Split the girls into groups of three, one catcher and two throwers. The throwers stand about 15 feet apart. The first thrower throws the ball out in front of her, causing the fielder to move laterally to field the ball. Once the fielder catches the ball, she throws it back to the other thrower who throws the ball directly out in front of her, causing the fielder to move laterally in the other direction to field the ball.



Every "station is doing a different drill (i.e.: pop flies, grounder, short hops). I have the girls rotate clockwise from station to station every minute until they all are back where they started.

Four Corners Running Drill

Divide the players equally among the four bases. One at a time from each base will be running, with the others waiting their turn. At 'go' from the coach, the four take off. Proper technique is a must and the goal would be to do a certain amount right in a row before going on to something else.

Player at the plate: Simulates a swing. Takes off as if hitting a double and possibly a triple. Makes a good turn at first. Picks up the 3rd base coach half way to 2nd. Rounds 2nd hard, 'picks up the ball' and returns to 2nd quickly.

Player at first: From a lead, goes from 1st to 3rd. Picks up the 3rd base coach half way to 3rd. Makes a hard turn at 3rd then returns quickly.

Player at 2nd: From a lead, goes from 2nd to home. Picks up the 3rd base coach and makes a good turn. Runs hard through the plate.

Player at 3rd: From a lead, goes back to the bag to tag. Takes off for home, rounds it, and then takes off for 1st as if beating out a single, looks inside towards the 1st base dugout as he crosses the bag for possible overthrow.

Find It Drill (great drill for catchers)

Have the player get in fielding position. Coach stands behind the player. With a ball in each hand extend arms out to each side so player can barely see each ball. Toss 1 ball into the air, yell "now", and get out of the way. The player needs to find the ball and catch it before it hits the ground.

Tandem Running Drill

One of the drills we run is instead of just having the boys run sprints we make two lines at first base, and on the coaches call, two by two they need to race down to second. Here's the twist. Each race is different. On the word "GO" they karaoke, (running sideways criss-crossing your feet), and then the next pair steps up. On their "GO" the **first** pair needs to turn and sprint the rest of the way to second while the **second** pair is starting their karaokes. We use any combination of back-peddling, karaoke, sprints, and bear crawl. It sounds something like this, "(first race) Bear crawl.....on the second "go" get up and run. (second race) back peddle.....on the second "go" karaoke the rest of the way. (third race) karaoke....on the second "go" turn and run... (fourth race) back peddle... on the second "go" turn and run the rest of the way."

The first time you run this 70% of your players will fall on their backsides. Within 3 weeks you will notice that your players will be able to back-peddle at full speed and turn into a full sprint with two fluid cross-over steps. Simple, fun drill that will improve agility in your players.



If they start dogging it on this then determine a winner of each race and start elimination rounds until you end up with the last two that have not lost a race yet. All players eliminated need to be cheering for their teammates that are still in the races.

Team Tag

2 girls at pitcher mound with glove and ball in glove.

Groups of 2 girls at home-plate. In groups of 2, the girls at home plate must stay within the foul lines and run to 2nd base without getting tagged. The taggers (2 at pitchers mound) must tag the runner with ball in glove at all times.

This game teaches them to avoid the tag and to always tag with the ball in the glove. Plus it helps develop their running skills.

Simsbury Little League Fastpitch Drills “Coach Swap”

AAA Division

Scrambled Eggs

Have 1/4th the players line up behind first base, 1/4th the players line up behind second base, 1/4th the players line up behind third base, and 1/4th the players line up at home. You will need to have a dozen or so eggs (not hard boiled). Give 2 eggs (one for each hand) to the first player in line at home. She has to run to first base and slide, with her hands up so as not to break the eggs. The first player in line at first base gets the eggs from the runner and runs to second base and slides. This continues until all the players have run and slid. You will be amazed how few (if any) eggs are broken.

Sack of Peas

When warming up for games when we travel we carry a bag of dry peas with us because so many of these small schools we play don't have batting cages we use the small peas to throw to the girls to warm up hitting and its also a good drill to work on keeping your eyes on the ball.

Garbage Can Throws

Use a large outdoor garbage can, tipped over at home plate facing center field. Place the players in a line in center field, and have them throw the ball home (one at a time) trying to throw the ball into the



garbage can. End the practice with this drill, and have a reward (candy, soda, gum, etc) for the player (if any) that makes it in the garbage can. You can decide how many times to go through the line.

Star Drill

I have adapted a drill that I use during INF drills: C, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and SS are all in their positions. Ball begins with the C who throws down to 2nd with the 2nd basewoman covering (game like situation), who then throws to the 3rd base who is moving back to make a sweeping tag she then comes up throwing over to 1st, 1st then throws to 2nd with the SS coming over to 2nd and the SS is quick to react and makes the throw back to home where the C is putting a tag on a sliding runner. The key to this drill is having everyone move like a "game situation" to cover and place tags in correct positions. I call this my "Kite Drill" If you were to draw it out it resembles a kite.

Catcher's Drill

Place a catcher about 8-10 feet away from a wall. The coach or another player stands just behind the catcher, out of his vision. With a bucket of balls you start throwing them (underhand) one by one against the wall so that the bounce will come directly at the catcher at a reasonable speed. It is real easy to move the throws around to simulate any type of location. The catcher gets in his receiving position with the glove up. When the coach starts to swing his arm backward, he says "ball", simulating about the time that the pitchers stride foot would hit the ground. The catcher then relaxes the mitt and reacts to the pitch working on receiving and framing. You can use tennis balls with no glove, or softballs with your mitt. Similar drill, you stand about 10 feet in front of the catcher directly facing him. You have a milk crate full of balls, using a backhand flip, you throw the balls at the catcher rapid fire moving the ball around to simulate all different locations.

Grounder's Drill

- Split the team in half
- Use bats as the boundaries on each end (4 total - 2 each side)
- Space the bats about 20-30' apart and the girls line up between the bats facing the other team so it's 6 against 6
- Hard grounders are then exchanged between teams
- If the ball gets thru, that player is out
- This continues until one team (or both) is down to 1 player - then if the team with one player stops the thrown grounder from going thru, she can pull in another teammate...bumping the advantage of that team up to 2 players
- The first team to lose all the players, loses
- The teammates can back each other up as long as they don't go behind the imaginary line between the bats - so the player can charge the ball and the team can back her up

The winning team gets to choose what the losing team does - laps or base sprints. They LOVE making



this decision.

Around the Field

- Split into 2 teams...1 team is runners, the other is fielding
- Catcher starts the cycle by throwing to 2nd (continues around the field-NO pitcher), as the runner is running the bases
- The object is to get the ball back home before the runner - NOT to get the runner out

What it teaches the fielders:

1. know what to do with the ball when they get it - know where to go with it
2. throwing accuracy-the team is depending on you to make a good throw (and catch)
3. move FAST

What it teaches the runners:

1. speed
2. focus on the objective and teamwork to depend on your team (in this case, the runners) to tell you where the ball is

Throws Home

We place a 5 gallon bucket in front of home plate. We line up half the girls at second base and the other half at shortstop. We hit ground balls to them and watch as they field the ball and throw at the bucket. They receive 2 points for a direct hit and 1 for a bounce hit.

Throw Them Out

Center fielder, first baseman, catcher and third baseman. All other players line-up behind each position to rotate. Fly ball is hit to the center fielder who is to throw the ball home. The first baseman assumes the cut-off position and the catcher has to be vocal on lining him up and if they want the ball to be cut-off. The throw is either cut-off and thrown home or to third or the throw goes through to the catcher. The catcher then throws to the third baseman.

Once the center fielder catches the ball, he rotates to the first baseman line. First baseman goes to catcher, catcher moves to third base, third base moves to center field. This is a good drill on teaching the fundamentals of catching fly balls, lining up the cut-off and having accurate throws. By rotating positions, each player gets to understand the role of that position and keeps them moving.

Team Captain

One of the biggest problems that I've had with my team is keeping their attention during practice and in the games. First, if a player makes an avoidable error during practice then I have the entire team run a



lap on the field and I explain to them that we are a team, if one player does not have his head in the game, the whole team suffers. Second, at the end of practice I award a "Team Captain" hat to the one player who puts forth the most effort during practice. This "Team Captain" hat is then worn by that player in the next game. At the end of the game, the hat is returned to me and the competition for the hat starts over again. Third, at the end of each game I award a game ball that is signed by all of the coaches. This game ball is awarded to the player that made the best plays or the player that showed the most team spirit. All of my players really love the "Team Captain" hat and the game ball.

Relay to the Buckets

You need 3 (5) gallon buckets, a back stop, 2 coaches and 1 baseball per player.

You split the team into 2 teams. 1 player playing second base and 1 playing right field. The balance of the team is standing next to the coach. The coach throws the ball behind the right fielder and yells cut-off. The second baseman runs out to be the cut-off man. The right fielder hits the cut-off man who in turn makes a throw to home plate. Sitting on home plate are the 3 buckets that must be hit directly or with 1 hop. After the cut-off man makes the throw the outfielder becomes the 2nd baseman and a new player runs out to play right-field. The original second baseman goes to the back of the line and the drill starts again.

Now the fun part. You do the exact same thing with short-stop and left field and make it a competition between the 2 teams. Most hits or 1st to hit wins the competition.

Fence Drill

Around most softball fields there is a chain linked fence. On our practice field the fence is 7 feet high and is divided by poles every 11 feet or so. Choose a three pole section to use as the backdrop for this drill.

The two outside poles are the boundaries for the basis of this challenge. Pick any two fielders (side by side position players such as third and short really works well) and stand them (backs to fence) about 1-2 feet away from the fence.

Place the hitter 35 feet away lined up centered with the middle pole. IMPORTANT....Be sure fielders stagger themselves so that if both dive at the same time for a middle ball, the drill will not end in disaster.

Hit a set # of balls at the fence. We usually do sets of 20. Fielder's objective: Keep the ball from touching the fence within the set boundaries. Every time the ball hits the fence in fair territory the batter scores 1 point. If the ball is blocked but not completely stopped the fielder must hustle after it to keep it from touching the fence. As long as the fence is not touched...no points are scored. Keep in mind the top of the fence is in play so line drives and low pops are legal.

Goal is to have the fewest balls hit the fence in a set number of fungo attempts. I often hit as a fun,



coach-to-team challenge. We have fun with this and the kids get bragging rights if the coach can't score off them.

4 on 9

I have several drills we like to use but one fun one to build in team fun is just put a 9 person defense out on the field and have a four person team of players walk up to the plate and fungo hit the ball and run. This creates real game situations and keeps play moving. If the hitter scores or makes an out then you change to a defensive position. You can also play to 3 outs.

Thunderball (Contributed by Peter Gailey)

Split the players into 2 teams. Coaches pitch. Spread the defense out around the field. The offense takes turns hitting one rotation through the lineup, every player hits once. When the ball is hit, the batter runs around the bases, trying to touch as many bases as possible before each defensive player touches the ball. The defense must field the ball, then throw it from player to player until each touches it. Offensive team scores points equal to number of bases acquired before all defenders have touched the ball. Every everyone has batted, switch sides.

Bubba

The drill is meant for conditioning and reaction. The girls get a partner and stand approximately 25 yards away from each other, so you have two lines facing each other. One line sits on the floor or ground, and on coach's signal gets up and sprints to her partner, slaps her hand then sits down again. The partner sprints down to where her partner started and sits. The first partner then stands and sprints to her partner as soon as the partner sits down and again slaps her hand. Each partner does this 3 times. Then, without a pause, they do it from a lying down position on back 3 times, then from stomach 3 times. Each partner does it 9 times total. All the while, they are verbally encouraging their partner while their partner is running. This is great for simulating sliding into a base and popping up and running to the next base when the ball gets away from the fielding team on a base stealing attempt.

Outfield Cycles

Outfield drill: we have the girls line up in left field. The coach hits first ball to left the fielder than throws to second, then runs to center coach hits another fly ball fielder throws to third than runs to right coach hits another fly ball fielder throws to home and then runs around home plate and gets back in line.

This gives your outfielders lots of practice at all of the out fielding positions.

Walk the Line (For Catchers)



To begin, have your catcher line up straddling a foul line by first or third base, facing the outfield wall. Have each of them practice their jump pivot footwork and throwing motions down the foul line. This can also be done indoors along a painted line or a seam in the carpet.

The catcher should start from their "Runners On" stance and simulate receiving a pitch right down the middle of the foul line. They should begin their jump pivot footwork, making sure that when they do the jump pivot that their right foot lands directly on the foul line followed quickly by their left foot. This will train their feet to get properly aligned toward second base and will help them make more accurate throws. They can visualize throwing the ball right down the foul line accurately to second as they do this shadow box drill, or you can actually have them throw to a fielder stationed the proper distance away, if you have the room.

To practice throwing to second base on a tough inside pitch, which I feel is the most difficult throw for a catcher, have the catchers switch from straddling the line to standing with just their left foot on the line. Have them simulate receiving a pitch coming down the line. They should then be able to complete their jump pivot with their feet landing on the foul line again. This drill will help catchers stay properly aligned to their target with their center of gravity and power base underneath them, which makes for a lot stronger, quicker and more accurate throw.

To work on throwing to second on an outside pitch, have the catcher line up facing down the foul line with their right foot on the line this time. In this drill have the catchers simulate backhanding an outside pitch to a right handed batter. There are two basic ways to make this throw in this drill. The first is with the standard two step jump pivot; however, the catcher's feet should land just to the left of the foul by 6 inches or so. The second is only recommended for catchers with really strong throwing arms and is often referred to as the "Rock and Fire" or plant and throw technique. For this technique have the catcher simulate backhanding the ball down the foul line while loading up over the right foot. The catcher then needs to step directly down the foul line towards the target to complete the throw. This technique requires just one step with the left foot, and is an extremely quick and effective throwing technique provided that the catcher has a quick and smooth transfer of ball from glove to hand and a strong arm as previously mentioned.

Catching & Throwing Drill

I line them up 25 feet apart from their throwing partner. I then bark out "Ready....Fire" . They count in unison "one!", then I shout "Ready,... Fire!". They reply "two!". The goal is to catch your partner's throw or at least stay in front of it and keep the ball from getting past you. If my kids do this successfully after 10 throws and no errors, the Coaches do 5 push ups. If the kids make bad throws or let the ball get past them, the players do 5 push ups. We repeat this drill at 50 feet and then 75 feet. Turning any drill into a contest makes practice more fun for kids at this age. Hopefully this will translate into successful catching and throwing without errors in real game situations.

Bunting in the Bucket

While trying to bunt, my players were swatting at the ball and could not get the concept of catching the ball with the bat. I cut the bottom off of a plastic clothing detergent bottle and screwed it to the sweet



spot of a wood bat. I then told the kids to catch a tennis ball inside of the “bucket”. Though it is impossible to actually catch the ball in the “bucket” (it bounces out) the boys began to consistently have the ball hit in the “bucket” while trying to catch it. I coupled this with a bunting competition at the end of practice. I had lanes set up to the left and right with good bunts, in the lanes, being worth a point and bunts to the pitcher (every teams all star) minus a point. The winner of the contest gets a pack of baseball cards. More than half of my players are now great bunters. At this level teams that can bunt well are well ahead of the game.

2 Ball Hitting

Using a catching net, or a fence, have two different colored small (golf ball size) wiffle balls. Toss up one of each color at the same time, call out one color and the batter has to hit that color ball.

This is a very fun drill and it teaches the players to keep their eye on the ball and hand-eye coordination.

Bunt Bowling

Set up a dozen small orange cones between the 1st base and 3rd base lines in front of home plate, placing more cones closer to the chalk lines. A coach standing 20 feet from home plate soft tosses to a batter. For every cone the ball hits, they receive a point. Have the next player to bat take away the cone that was hit to make the drill more challenging and to force the batter to work both base lines. Pitch about 12-15 balls for each player.

If the bunted ball rolls past the coach, a point can be taken away or they receive one less pitch. This helps the batter to understand to "catch" the ball with the bat and not to push the bat towards the pitch. Progressions include a pitching machine and then live pitching.

3-Ball Drill

This is a team drill that works on throwing accuracy and base running at the same time.

Set up three cones down the 3rd base line with a ball in front of them, evenly spaced 10-30' from 3rd base. Half the players are fielders at 3rd base and half are base runners at home plate. The first fielder sets up like a base runner on 3rd base, and the base runner sets up at the corner of home plate.

On the coaches whistle, the base runner runs from home to 2nd base while the fielder is approaching the first ball. The idea is for the fielder to have all three balls accurately thrown to the 2nd baseman before the base runner slides safely into 2nd base.

The key points are for the fielder to approach the ball and set up in line with 2nd base. The fielder will have to stay low approaching each ball instead of standing straight up running to each ball. The key point for the base runner is to cut the inside bag at 1st base and slide to the outfield side of 2nd base, opposite the direction of the throw.

The drill can be modified for outfielders, setting up the three cones in centerfield. The base runners will have to slide to infield side of 2nd base.



**Simsbury Little League
Fastpitch Drills “Coach Swap”**

Majors/Juniors Division

Bounce Drill

We use dimpled machine balls because they are easy to bounce. The purpose of this drill is to make sure the hitter is balanced at the plate. The bouncer is about 30 feet from the hitter behind an L-screen. We attempt to bounce the ball towards the middle/away part of the plate. The hitter is instructed to hit the ball middle/away. Great drill for off-speed pitches.

Bounce Soft Toss

A variation on soft-toss. Instead of throwing the ball to the strike zone, bounce the ball so that it comes up to mid thigh for the hitter. This helps my kids track the ball better. (You can use waffles from in front of the hitter, wiffles from the direction of the pitcher, or softballs from behind your L-screen.)



Eye-Patch in the Cage

Put an eye patch over the left eye during batting cage w/ pitching machine. Helps hitters turn their head toward pitcher, eliminating head tilt and left-eye-only hitting. Strengthens concentration, and focus.

Chicken Wing

Take outfielders and line them up. Have a couple of footballs handy. Have the outfield tuck the football under their throwing arm like they were a running back, and have them practice tracking down balls over their heads. The football helps players keep everything "tucked in" so they aren't flailing all around as they head back toward the wall to make the catch.

Quarterback

Drill Purpose: Teaching outfielder to spot and react to fly ball (6 reps each fielder)
Equipment needed: Baseball, glove

Have outfielder lineup on foul line facing away from coach. Outfielder will sprint out about 15 yards. Coach will throw softball over right or left shoulders about 10 yards in front of the fielder. Once ball is in the air, coach will call "UP", left or right

Opposite Field Game

Divide your players into two equal teams. Have one of the coaches throw from a short distance behind an L screen. Tell the players they must try to hit opposite field. Play a regular game with the fielders in position. The only catch is that balls that go to the left of second base are outs. This is a great tool to practice your hit and run situations without actually telling the team what you are working on. Plus they will love the competition.

Tennis Ball Drill

HITTER STANDS IN THE BATTERS BOX. PARTNER STANDS ON OUTSIDE CORNER W/ A TENNIS BALL IN HAND. HE WILL BOUNCE BALL JUST IN FRONT OF THE PLATE. AT BOUNCE, HITTER WILL LOAD-STRIDE. AT BOUNCE, PARTNER WILL YELL FASTBALL OR CHANGE UP. YOU HIT FASTBALL ON THE WAY UP. YOU HIT CHANGE UP ON THE WAY DOWN. GREAT DRILL TO KEEP HANDS AND WEIGHT BACK.

Tag 'em Out Throw 'em Out

Begin with at least two players with gloves at each base. Ball starts at home. Player throws from home to 2B, and immediately bursts toward 1B. Receiver at 2B catches ball and throws to 1B, trying to beat



the runner.

The 2B receiver, after her throw, immediately bursts toward 3B. The 1B receiver throws across to 3B, trying to beat the runner; then immediately bursts toward 2B. The 3B receiver throws to 2B, trying to beat the runner; then immediately bursts toward home, and it starts again. When the runner reaches her base, she goes to the end of the line and awaits her turn. Each thrower runs to the next base; each receiver throws to the base ahead of the runner.

The faster the runners, the more pressure on the catch-throw execution. Suggestion: Walk through slowly at first, then gradually accelerate the pace. This is a great conditioning and communication drill. Everyone (together) must call out the base to which the ball must be thrown. Another tip to keep the drill moving is to have coaches positioned at each base with extra balls for overthrows. Stay alert and attentive.

The Bunt Game

My players love drills that have a competitive component. For simultaneous bunt offense and bunt defense, I form teams of 4 or 5 (great if you have 8, 10, 12 or 15 players at practice). One team in the field (1st baseman, 2nd baseman, shortstop, and 3rd baseman (+ defensive pitcher if you have multiple of 5)), one team on offense and, if you have enough players for a 3rd team, they can start in the outfield doing fly ball drills.

Using a batting practice coach as pitcher or a pitching machine (if done with a pitcher playing defense, she simply starts next to the batting practice coach or pitching machine (or if you have a pitcher that pitches consistent strikes, have the girls bunt off a "live" pitcher)), we start with a runner on 1st. We allow the 1st baseman and 3rd baseman to start no closer than 2/3 the distance from home to their respective bases (everyone knows we're bunting). The defense can charge once the hitter shows bunt. We play this game without a catcher, so there is no stealing.

Teams earn points based on:

Offense earns 1 point if: The bunter is out at 1st, but the runner advances to 3rd.

Offense earns 1 point if: The bunter is safe at 1st, and the runner advances to 2nd.

Offense earns 2 points if: The bunter is safe at 1st, and the runner advances to 3rd.

Offense loses 2 points if: The bunter does not get a bunt down fairly after 3 strikes or bunter pops up, defense catches the ball, and the runner does not advance.

Defense earns 2 points if: The bunter is out at 1st and the runner is tagged out attempting to go to 3rd.

No points awarded if: The bunter is out at 1st and the runner advances to 2nd.

The play is re-set after each hitter, putting the hitter on 1st after their turn at bat. The runner returns to the dugout to get in line for her turn to bunt.



Assign a captain of each team to keep track of their points. Establish how many times each bunter will get up for each "inning"(twice each usually works best).

The objective is to keep the action moving quickly with no one player standing idle for any length of time. If played with 3 teams, simply rotate after a team completes their turn on offense (offense moves to defense, defense moves to outfield drills, team in outfield moves to offense). Play the game for multiple innings with a reward for the winning team (or a penalty for the losing team(s)).

3 Home Plate Drill

When we take batting practice off a machine, I like to place three home plates for the players to stand at. We take 5 cuts at the normal distance then, move up and take 5 cuts, and then move up 5 cuts. This makes cage work more challenging and eliminates the player getting the machine timed. I also like it because it varies what the pitch looks like without changing the machine.

Quick Baserunning Drill

Divide the players into two groups. Half of them line up at home plate and the other half line-up halfway between home and first. My assistant coach hits a ball into the backstop. At the crack of the bat the first player in line at home runs through first base trying to beat out a grounder while the first player in the other line rounds first and goes hard into second. They remain on those bases.

At the next crack of the bat the next two players in line do the same thing while the player on second takes off and scores while the runner on first rounds second and stops at third base. We now have the bases loaded. On the next crack of the bat the two runners at the front of the lines take off as do the runners from first and second. The runner at third must tag up. I will yell "go" when the runner coming from second is half way to third. The runner from third has to beat the runner coming from second to home. They usually have to hustle because the runner coming from second has a head of steam going.

Each time a player crosses the plate they go to the back of the opposite line they started from the previous time. We do this drill 5 minutes each practice as it is a great warm-up drill as well.

Bounce the Tennis Ball

Here's a hitting drill. This works better on an even flat surface, or cement surface. Have the player face a high chain link fence, stand about 10 to 15 feet from the fence. Stand behind the batter enough not to get hit with the bat and bounce a tennis ball into her strike zone. She spots the ball as it comes into her strike zone and hits the ball forward into the fence. She is to always look forward as normal and wait till the ball gets into her strike zone before she hits it. Quick bat hits the ball.

Cut Off Man



We have 3 - 4 teams (lines) of 3 lining up approximately 90 ft from each other. The first guys start approximately 5 ft from the outfield wall. On the whistle they throw the ball against the outfield fence and run towards it. At this point we stress picking the ball up properly, looking for their target and making a good throw using only one step. The second row, now acting as the cut off man, then receives the throw and fires to the last man of the team. The last man fires back to the cutoff and back to the outfielder that started the drill.

It gets very heated and you can see girls competing to get through it first. In the event that they are having trouble making the throws properly, we have each position stop prior to throwing the ball and locate their target, take their one step and then fire the ball to the cutoff man. This allows each participant to work on the proper mechanics.



Handling Difficult Parents **Helpful Tips to Keep the LL Softball Priorities Straight**

Being a softball coach is not always easy...especially when you run into "difficult softball parents" or DSP'S.

You know the parents I'm referring to: overbearing, overly competitive, and overly engaged in your decisions as a coach.

These parents can create unique challenges for any coach in dealing with complaints about playing time, who gets to play what position, sportsmanship issues etc.

No matter how knowledgeable, fair, or kind you are to your team, you can probably expect an irate parent or two to crop up during the season.

Here are a few tips you might find helpful when dealing with these situations.

1. Don't discuss the issue at the game

The first thing the coach should avoid is discussing the problem with the parent on the field, especially if he/she is visibly upset.

2. Schedule a separate time/venue to have the discussion

Rather than discuss the problem then and there, the coach should agree to meet or telephone the parent at a mutually convenient time to discuss the complaint. By doing this, you avoid giving the parent an audience, allow him/her to 'cool off', and give yourself time to prepare an appropriate response to the complaint.

3. Be an active listener

When you eventually talk to the parent, one of the most important things you can do is be an active listener. Doing things like taking notes, maintaining eye contact and nodding to acknowledge you have heard what the parent is saying are crucial.

4. Don't interrupt



Even if parents raise their voices or their stories have are not fact-based, the coach should avoid interrupting. By interrupting a parent, you risk inflaming the situation.

5. Don't get defensive

The coach should avoid defending or justifying their action. Such behavior at this point will only make the situation worse.

6. Show empathy

Respond to their concerns with statements like "I'm sorry that you feel your child has been treated unfairly". This will help the parent to understand his/her problem is being taken seriously. They are likely to be calmer and more willing to find a solution.

7. Clarify the problem

This can be achieved by asking probing questions. This helps both parties to focus on the problem (not personalities), stick to the facts, and avoid being caught up in extraneous issues.

8. Offer a range of solutions

A lot of times, parents just want their feelings to be heard and understood. If they want more, try to offer a range of solutions. This demonstrates a willingness to work together to solve the problem. It's important to avoid making promises that you can't keep. Explain to them what you can and cannot do.

9. Get closure

Ideally, you will given the parent a number of options and agreed on a mutual course of action. At this point it's appropriate to end the meeting. It should conclude with three things:

- * Leave the parent with a closing action statement (e.g. I'll get on to that now').
- * Thank the parent for their interest (no matter how unpleasant the meeting).
- * If follow-up is required, tell them when you will contact them ('I'll call you tomorrow').

This will leave the parent feeling as though their complaint has been heard, and the parent-coach relationship will be strengthened.

10. Leave the door open

There will be cases, however after this whole process where you will not be able to give the parent the response they are looking for. It is important in these circumstances that the coach



leave the door open for the parent, e.g. 'If there is ever anything else, please come to me'.

By doing this the parent will at least feel that his/her complaint has been taken seriously, and the coach-parent relationship, however strained, will remain intact. Not doing this could allow the problem to fester... and the parent could damage your reputation through word-of-mouth.

11. Always Remember, there is help available.

In all cases, please make sure to advise your division director of issues that might arise. Especially in cases where you cannot resolve the challenge using the tools listed above, helping your division director understand the challenge will allow the division director, as well as the parent liaison and Softball Vice President to consult with you, and the parent if necessary, to resolve the challenge.



86 Ways to say Very Good

Being a Little League coach is a rewarding enjoyable experience that can leave a lasting impression on players, parents and other coaches. One way to leave your mark is to interact with your team in a positive manner. In a booklet by Darrell J. Burnett, Ph.D., *The Art of Being a Successful Youth League Manager-Coach (Baseball/Softball)* he lays out 86 ways to say very good and compliment the players you are coaching. Please look over the list and see what works for you.

1. Good for you!
2. Superb.
3. You did that very well.
4. You've got it made.
5. Terrific!
6. That's not bad!
7. Couldn't have done it better myself.
8. Marvelous!
9. You're doing fine.
10. You're really improving.



11. You're on track now!
12. Now you've figured it out.
13. Outstanding!
14. That's coming along nicely.
15. I knew you could do it.
16. Good work.
17. You figured that out fast.
18. I think you've got it now.
19. I'm proud of the way you worked today.
20. Tremendous!
21. You certainly did well today.
22. Perfect!
23. Nice going.
24. You've got your brain in gear today.
25. Now you've got the hang of it.
26. WOW!



27. Wonderful!

28. You're getting better every day.

29. You're learning fast.

30. You make it look too easy.

31. That's a good boy/girl.

32. That's very much better.

33. Super!

34. You did a lot of work today!

35. Keep it up!

36. You've got this down pat.

37. Congratulations.

38. Exactly right!

39. Nice going.

40. Excellent!

41. Sensational!

42. You're doing beautifully.



43. You've just about mastered that!

44. That's really nice.

45. That's the best ever.

46. That's great!

47. Way to go!

48. That's the way to do it!

49. That's quite an improvement.

50. Good thinking.

51. You're really going to town.

52. Keep up the good work.

53. That's it!

54. That's better.

55. You haven't missed a thing.

56. Fantastic!

57. You outdid yourself today!

58. You're doing a good job.



59. That's the right way to do it.

60. That's better.

61. Right on!

62. Well, look at you go!

63. That's the best you've ever done.

64. That's RIGHT!

65. You must have been practicing!

66. Great!

67. Keep on working it; you're getting better.

68. You remembered!

69. That kind of work makes me very happy.

70. You're really working hard today.

71. That's what I call a fine job!

72. I knew you could do it!

73. I'm proud of you.

74. One more time and you'll have it.



75. Fine!

76. That's good.

77. Good job.

78. You really make this fun.

79. Good remembering.

80. Nothing can stop you now.

81. You are doing much better today.

82. Keep on trying.

83. You are really learning a lot.

84. You've just about got it.

85. I've never seen anyone do it better.

86. You are very good at that.

For more information about Darrell J. Burnett, Ph.D. visit his website www.djburnett.com



Little League Softball Divisions

<http://www.littleleague.org/media/softball.htm>

Little League Coach's Box

<http://www.littleleague.org/learn/newsletters/CBNewsletter.htm>

Free Little League Coach Resources

http://www.littleleague.org/managersandcoaches/Coach_Resource_Center.htm

Role of the Manager/Coach

<http://www.littleleague.org/managersandcoaches/coachrole.htm>

Little League Double Goal Coaching

http://www.littleleague.org/managersandcoaches/Double_Goal_Coaching.htm

Little League Second Goal Parenting

http://www.littleleague.org/parents/Welcome_to__Second-Goal__Parenting.htm

A Guide for Beginning Softball Coaches

<http://softball.isport.com/softball-guides/a-guide-for-beginning-softball-coaches>

