

# Practice Drills – Examples

## *Pitching Drills*

When you practice it is important to keep the team actively engaged. Standing around should be kept to a minimum. We recommend the use of “stations” or the team divided into small groups that rotate through various practice drills. This will allow for each player to practice key baseball fundamentals throughout each scheduled practice time. Additionally, coaches may try group competitions to facilitate a drill in a fun, yet competitive way. Coaches should use the Practice Template to design specific drills needed prior to a scheduled practice.

1. Motion Focus

To work on delivery mechanics and teach muscle memory. Soft toss against a backstop from 10-15 feet away. Pace of delivery is slowed down to exaggerate and focus on components of pitching motion.

2. One Knee

To teach upper body mechanics. Pitchers pair up and move about 20-30 feet apart, depending on arm strength. Player with the ball gets on throwing knee with stride foot extended in front of him, toe pointed at target. He starts with his hands in the break position, and brings the ball out of his glove and through the full backswing. Focus is on keeping fingers on top of the ball and getting full extension on both the reach back and the follow through.

3. Power Position

This drill is designed to assist players with throwing mechanics. The pitchers simply stand anywhere from 40 to 60 feet apart (there are different variations of the drill). One will throw from the power position with the other receiving – either squatting down or standing. This drill also can be executed either on flat ground or a mound. The pitcher starts by creating a wide base with his feet. First, using a four-seam grip, the hand is placed on the ball at chest level. Most – if not all – of the weight is shifted to the back leg as the ball is taken out of the glove. At this point the throwing arm should be extended toward center field with the hand above the ball. The front shoulder should be pointed directly toward the target, acting almost as a site as the pitcher peers toward home. From this point the weight starts to come forward through rotation, with the elbow staying above the shoulder. The ball is released and the arm completes the follow through. Both feet remain on the ground, and the hips turn. The trail foot should stay near the rubber and the front foot should point forward. This drill is not intended to be performed with the pitcher throwing at maximum velocity. The focus is on sound mechanics – elbow up, hip rotation, arm follow through – and developing muscle memory.

Short-armeders should start with the weight forward in the follow-through position before taking the weight all the way back and then completing the drill. This will give them the feeling of stretching out the throwing motion. Pitchers who throw the ball high a lot and tend to drop their elbows can have the catcher shorten up. To throw strikes from a shorter distance, pitchers will have to get their elbows up and stay on top of the ball. A shortened throwing distance also is good for showing long-striders that a shorter stride will help them get on top of the ball and throw it downhill.

4. Power

To teach lower body mechanics. Pitchers pair up and move about 30-40 feet apart, depending on arm strength. Player with the ball gets in the middle of his delivery stride – lead knee behind the ball of the lead foot, lead toe pointed at target, weight on back foot, lead arm shoulder high and scoping target, throwing arm shoulder high in L-position. He completes the pitch from that point, driving his lead elbow down and rotating his hips and shoulders through, and chest finishing over his lead knee. Focus is on proper weight shift, torso rotation, arm extension, and balanced finish.

5. Balance

To develop a balanced delivery. Pitcher can do this with or without a ball and partner. Slowly goes through delivery, focusing on mechanics. When pitcher reaches the knee lift stage, he holds that balanced position for several seconds before slowly completing the rest of his delivery.

6. Balance Points

To improve pitcher's balance. Pitcher starts from the stretch position, and then goes into his knee lift. Rather than transition into the stride, he lowers his knee and taps his front foot on the ground, then lifts his knee again, all while balancing on his back leg. He repeats the tap movement two more times, and then delivers the pitch.

7. Walk Ups

To accustom pitchers to the feeling of a short, compact delivery. Have pitcher stand several paces behind the rubber. Pitcher walks up to the rubber and goes immediately into his pitch delivery – plant foot, knee lift, etc... Focus is on developing muscle memory for a more natural pitching motion i.e. to counteract pitchers who have a contrived, stylized, or overly long motion.