

Virginia Baseball Club
Coaches Certification

Practice Organization

By Mike Murray

I. Be Organized

- a. Have a daily plan
- b. What do you want to accomplish today?
- c. Once games have started, analyze previous game and select one or two problem areas to work on.
- d. Ask for player input.

II. Get Help

- a. Find people to help your assistant coach and you during practice. Most people can hold a hitting stick, put a ball on a tee, or at least help shag balls during batting practice
- b. Recognize your coaches' strengths and utilize them.
- c. Take time to meet with assistant coaches. It should be clear to them what you would like to accomplish at practice and what their duties will be.
- d. Schedule part-time practice coaches. Ask parents when they will be available at practice and make them commit. Few assistant coaches will be able to attend all practices. However, all parents should be able to attend a few! Knowing how much help you will have at practice will allow you to plan accordingly.

III. Practice Sessions

- a. Have a regular routine.
- b. Break session into time segments.
- c. Emphasize individual skill development and team concept.
- d. Make it fun! Attention spans are short for young and old.
- e. Make it competitive.
- f. Find a good batting practice pitcher.
- g. Bring lots of balls (baseballs, tennis balls, waffle balls, etc.)
- h. Use "station to station" rotation system for individual skill development.
- i. Make sure all players have something constructive to do all the time

IV. The Practice Plan

The following practice plan is based on a two-hour time frame. Time segments may be adjusted to accommodate longer or shorter practices and different age groups. It is designed for typical youth league field with no additional facilities available, such as batting cages etc. If additional facilities are available the activities could be expanded accordingly. Every practice should start with brief jogging, light stretching and progression throwing. A good teaching sequence is TEACH, DRILL and PRACTICE.

Ideally, the team should be divided into three groups of four players. This can be done in two ways. Divide players by experience and skill level for individual skill work.

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This will allow coaches to address more specific needs of the players. Next, divide players into three evenly matched teams for situational practices and scrimmages. This will create a competitive environment and spark interest. A separate or pre-practice should be scheduled just for pitchers and catchers, in order to provide adequate time and attention.

- Briefly explain topics to be covered during practice (focus of the day).
- **Jog and stretch – 5 min**
- **Progression throwing drills – 10 min.**

Players should not be allowed to pick up a ball at practice before doing throwing drills. Constantly stress need for proper throwing mechanics. Over 75% of all errors committed are throwing errors. Coaches should be with players during throwing time.

- **Position skill development or hitting practice (3 groups) – 25 min.**

In this time period you can choose to teach hitting skills or work on individual position skills.

Teaching Hitting Skills

Batting practice can be very boring if only one player is hitting and everyone else is standing around. To avoid this set up hitting stations. The hitting rotation can include three stations; live batting practice, drill stations in the outfield, and dry swings (on deck). Utilize drills that relate to topic(s) covered that day. Limit live batting practice rounds to 10-12 swings. There should be enough time for two rounds for each group. Players will get more swings during the scrimmage later in practice.

Defensive Position Skill Development

Use this time to teach players the progressions for fielding ground balls and catching fly balls. As the season progresses, include skills such run-downs and turning double plays.

- **Team situational practice – 15min.**

Situational practice is where players learn the game. Select one or two topics to cover each practice. Rotate three groups through infield, outfield, and baserunning. An assistant should be at each station. It is important in the learning process for players to work at all positions.

- **Controlled Scrimmage-30 min.**

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The scrimmage should be competitive and the level of intensity high. I suggest you have a coach pitch so that the ball is constantly in play. Players should play as they would in a game. Observe how well players adapt practice topics into game situations. The three teams should rotate from outfield to infield to hitting/base running. In outfield the extra player can chase foul balls, catch, or pitch. Keep score. Finish the day with a fun activity, i.e. sliding, pass plays, relay competitions, baserunning, etc.

IN-SEASON PRACTICES-

The normal practice plan can be used after season has begun. The topics to be covered will be determined by the teams' play and situations that arise during the games. Take notes during games as a reminder of topics to be covered.

PITCHER AND CATCHER PRACTICE-

Pitcher and catcher practice should be held once a week during the first few weeks of practice. Once pitchers are throwing live in scrimmages, it should be done as needed. Pitchers should throw to catchers at least two times per week. Practice should not last longer than 1 hour.

Stretch and throw- form throwing (including catchers!)

Pitcher should start throwing on flat ground until arm strength has built up.

Pitchers should start by throwing 20-30 pitches and increase by 10 each week. Interval workout should start 2nd or 3rd week with 10-15 pitch intervals. Pitchers at AAA and below should not exceed 50 pitches.

Pitchers and catchers should work together on play at home on passes ball. Catchers should work on blocking balls in dirt and throwing to bases. Pitchers should work on fielding ground balls on mound.

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Sample Practice Schedule

"Setting Goals"

- 3:00 Cleats on, Jog and stretch... sand cans stretches...Review expectations.
- 3:05-3:15 Progression Throwing - long toss from positions
- 3:15-3:25 Drill Series #1
a) Pitchers: balance position to power position
b) Infielders: ready position/approach/ getting the good hops – coach hits fungo from 3b side of home plate to infielders at SS position. No throws to first.
c) OF- swaying, drop step – coach throws balls to left and right of fielder.
- 3:25-3:40 Drill Series #2
Pitchers: Bunts/Cov. 1st
Infielders: short grounders/moving through the ball (slow to medium speed) – coach, standing on 3b side of pitching mound, rolls balls to infielders at SS position. No throws to first.
OF- angles to the ball in gaps
- 3:40-4:00 Team Defense: Fly ball communication and relays
- 4:00-4:05 Water Break
- 4:05-4:30 Controlled scrimmage game (coach pitch) -3 teams of four players.
- 4:40-4:50 Base running
Home to first
Base hit
- 4:50- 5:00 Goal Setting Assignment