

Practice Drills – Examples

Infield 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. Low Ball

Player lines up against a back stop and simulates low throws to first by having balls thrown to him. Can be done with tennis balls or softer baseballs.

2. Slow roller line up

Line up three baseballs about four yards apart between the third baseman and homeplate. Have the player charge the first ball and pick it up with two hands and make a strong throw to first base. The player continues to the second ball, fielding and throwing it in the same fashion. He then continues to the third ball and uses his bare-hand technique.

3. Time to throw

Have a coach or player hit a number of variously-paced groundballs to an infielder. After each ground ball the batter should run to first, stopping when the third baseman has made the play on the ball. The coach can use this drill to demonstrate how much time the defender has to make the throw, even if he doesn't field the ball cleanly.

4. Short-hops

To give players practice at the difficult short hop, have two infielders get on their knees 15 to 25 feet apart. They intentionally throw short hops at each other. This exercise will develop fielding skills, but don't overlook the opportunity to emphasize throwing mechanics as well.

5. Short Distance Double Play

To practice mechanics and teamwork of routine double plays. Place infielders in normal positions. From the mound roll ground balls to each fielder to start the double play. Perform successive repetitions before moving to another fielder. Emphasize footwork and proper throwing technique (under-hand toss, over-hand throw).

6. Live Double Play

To give infielders practice at turning a variety of double plays in a game situation, developing both mental and physical aspects of the play. During batting practice have infielders turn each fielded ball into a double play.

7. Dirt Lines, Ground Balls

Great drill for teaching ground ball fundamentals. This drill is used to teach young players to get their hands and glove out front fielding a grounder. The young player often gets in the habit of catching close to his or her feet or slightly in front of the toes. As coaches, we want infielders to extend their arms and get the glove out in front so that they can see the ball into it. The player should “lay” the glove on the ground in front of his body. Each player's distance will vary. However, a good rule thumb is to try and extend the length from the player's arm or from the tip of fingers to the armpit.

Note: If a player is still having problems fielding the ball in front of the body, have the players take their baseball hats off, placing the bill of the cap in their mouth. Now repeat the drill, while they have the bill of hat in mouth. This will force the player to field the ball out in front of their body, as it will be impossible to look directly down (hat is blocking directly down)

8. Backhand

There are two types of backhands, but the three principles of fielding a ground ball still apply: set up with a wide base, the butt down and the glove out in front of the body. The ball always should be caught out in front of the body so that it is easy to see the ball go into the glove.

The first type of backhand is one in which the right foot (for right-handers) is the lead foot. On this play you take the right foot (left foot for left-handers) into the path of the baseball, creating a wider base, and collapse the trail leg to get the butt closer to the ground. Once the ball is caught it should be immediately taken to the center of the body without twisting the wrist. From there basic throwing principles take over (generate momentum toward the target, release the ball and follow the throw).

1. *Right-footed Backhand Drill* (left foot as the lead foot for left-handers)

Players line up across from the coach. The first player in line steps forward several feet, faces the coach and steps to the right with the right leg extended. He then pivots and drops the back knee all the way to the ground. The coach should be no more than 10 feet away, kneeling or sitting on a bucket with several baseballs. The coach rolls the first ball directly into the player's glove. The player relaxes the wrist so that the fingertips of the glove are touching the ground and the inside of the glove is visible to the coach. As the ball rolls into the glove, the player squeezes the ball without twisting the glove and brings the glove immediately up to his chest. Without standing up he tosses the ball back to the coach. This is repeated for five repetitions before the next player attempts the drill.

The second type of backhand is the one where the ball is hit farther away to the backhand side and when more reach is required. This approach requires that the left foot (right foot for left-handers) be used as the lead. The same basic principles as with the right-footed backhand apply, with the main difference being that the ball is played outside of the lead foot instead of in front of it.

2. *Left-footed Backhand Drill* (right foot as the lead foot for left-handers)

Players line up across from the coach. The first player in line steps forward several feet, faces the coach and crosses over with the left foot into a lunge position. As with the previous drill the trail knee can be dropped to the ground. The coach should be no more than 10 feet away, kneeling or sitting on a bucket with several baseballs. The coach rolls the first ball directly into the player's glove. The player relaxes the wrist so that the fingertips of the glove are touching the ground and the inside of the glove is visible to the coach. The ball should be caught out in front of the body with the glove positioned just outside the left foot. As the ball rolls into the glove, the player squeezes the ball without twisting the glove and brings the glove immediately up to his chest. Without standing up he tosses the ball back to the coach. This is repeated five times before the next player attempts the drill.

As players get older the backhand play becomes extremely important. Once your players have mastered these drills with their knees on the ground, have them try to raise their knee four or five inches off of the ground. This helps them get used to fielding in a slightly more realistic upright position. More advanced players can attempt the drill from an even more upright position as if they were attempting to field a ball during a game. An element of conditioning can be added by asking players to hold the lunge with their knees lifted slightly off the ground.

9. Backhand Clap

To develop mechanics for backhand ground balls, have players field an imaginary ball to their backhand, take a quick hard plant step with their back throwing leg, and simulate a throw to a target, clapping their hands on the throw follow through. Emphasize footwork, balance, and a quick transition to a compact throwing delivery.

10. Double Buckets: Ground Balls for Infielders

To maximize ground ball repetitions without wearing out arms, use 36 baseballs, two buckets and a fungo bat and hit ground balls to at least 3 players. Place the two buckets about 45 feet apart, with all of the balls in one bucket. The players are lined up single file with one behind another on the end with the empty bucket. The coach hits grounders. The players field each ground ball and get in proper throwing position. They then sprint to the empty bucket, drop the ball in and get in the back of the line. There is no throwing of balls during this drill. When all balls have been hit, fielded and dropped in the bucket, the coach and players swap ends and the drill starts over.