

DEVELOPING GOOD INFIELDBERS AND OUTFIELDERS

DRILLS for INFIELDBING MECHANICS

Board Glove Catching – encourages absorbing the ball and using two hands.

Heavy Ball Catch or Egg Toss – encourages the soft hands by bringing the hands inward or down with the ball.

Alligator Style – encourages a picture to be put into the young ones mind in order to use two hands.

Pepper – encourages the quick reflexes but aims to practice the motion of bringing the ball into the body with elbows out so that a quick release of the ball is possible.

Star Drill – encourages them to keep their eye on the ball and not to catch mice because of the short distance between players.

Coloured Dot Balls – encourages the set and ready position and forces them to watch the ball come into their glove.

No Gloves – forces them to use two hands.

Various Size Balls and Textures – makes two hands necessary no matter the size and encourages maintaining eye contact into the hands.

“M” – helps them visualize the placement of two hands and keeps the throwing hand in close for a throw.

“W” – helps them visualize the placement of two hands and prevents the cupping or creating a basket for the oncoming ball to bounce out of, or deflect up into their face.

Cup the Knees – gives the younger ones something to do with their hands rather than playing in the infield sand.

Beach Ball Sit – helps them visualize how low the bottom should go down(90 degrees to the ground) position and keeps the eyes and glove closer together for better eye contact with the ball

Monkey Walk – encourages a low lateral movement with the body and both hands out in front

2 Ball Drill – encourages them to move laterally and to field the ball at the mid-line of their body and to stay down on the ball keeping it in front if it is missed. Without gloves allows them to see the ball into their hands. Using board gloves or paddles encourages soft hands. Builds stamina

Backhand Drill (2 Balls) – encourages repetition to occur and proficiency of style

Charge Drill – encourages them to advance to the ball rather than waiting for it to come to them

Charge Drop Drill – encourages advancement on a bunt, change of direction and quick feet

Infielder Work Out – group together (ie. Pitcher, Catcher, 1B and 3B) so to learn each others range of movement on bunts, pop ups, and passed balls.

3 Throws Drill – encourages muscle memory for the three types: soft toss, $\frac{3}{4}$ throw with proper positioning, and long throw.

Infield/Pitcher Pop Fly –encourages communication and precedence

Infield/Outfield Blooper – encourages communication and precedence

DRILLS for OUTFIELD MECHANICS

Hoola Hoop Catch – teaches running to the landing site and getting both hands up

Football Toss – encourages the correct tracking of the ball and running on the balls of the feet give a smooth flight to the ball

Charge Drop Drill – encourages the correct technique for pivoting, crossovers, two hands and catching on the throwing side. Builds stamina.

Left/Right Drill – improves footwork and change in direction. Not shuffling backwards allows for faster lateral and backwards movement

Blind Drill – 1 and 2 balls – represents the element of surprise and improves tracking and teaches them not to panic and to see/understand the time element

Target Drill – encourages accuracy

Ball in the Hole – encourages correct pivot position over the ball at mid line and a throw. Saves steps and gets the ball in quicker

Ball off the fence – help to read the angle and to anticipate the bounce, therefore saving steps

Relay Drill– correct positioning and pivot and forces good accurate throws

INFIELDB DRILLS

DIRT LINES "Ground Ball Drill"

Great Drill For Teaching Ground Ball Fundamentals.

This drill is used to teach young players to get their hands and glove out front when fielding a grounder. The young player often gets in the habit of catching grounders 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 out in front of his body. Each player's distance will vary.

However, a good rule of thumb is to try and extend the length from the player's arm or from the tip of the fingers to the armpit. Another good measuring scale is they should be able to extend the length of the bat they use. This distance is measured on the ground from the back of his heel outward. For this drill we pair two players. The players will roll grounders to each other from about 6 to 8 feet. The coach draws two lines in the dirt about 8 feet apart. The players must catch the ball out in front of this line. The coach will then draw a second line for each player. This is the "feet" line. The player's feet must stay behind this line. The players roll the ball and catch it while making sure to: 1) Get extension, 2) Keep the elbows off the ribs, 3) Funnel the ball in using the top "bare" hand. 4) Work their feet as they bring the ball up to the correct "T" throwing position. 5) Roll the ball back to your partner 6) Repeat the process. 50 to 100 "GB's" each practice should be done.

The distance can be changed to accommodate the speed of the groundball work.

"Make Believe" Infield

Great warm-up for certain situations

The team takes a perfect infield by allowing every player to make a perfect catch and throw. The way this drill is conducted is the coach does not use a ball. He hits a "make-believe" ball. Each time the player goes through the correct motion of fielding the ball and making a perfect play. Each time the player receiving the throw will pat his glove to simulate a catch. Emphasis is placed on talking, following through, and making everything look perfect. No one will mess up or make a bad mistake. I have used this drill many, many times in practice and before games. It is especially good with young kids to emphasize correct body mechanics. It is also useful if you get to a field for a game and the playing surface is too wet or rough to take a "good" round of infield. Sometimes it is better not to use a real ball in warm-up if there is a risk of the ball taking a terrible bounce. Bad infield and warm-up may bring down "team esteem". I've never had a team take "make believe" infield that was anything less than great! It's always perfect!

Double Buckets Ground Ball Drill

This drill is actually a method of taking a lot of ground balls with out having your players make any throw. The drill requires 36 baseballs, two buckets and a fungo bat. The coach will be hitting ground balls to at least 3 players. 5 or 6 players can be worked at a time using this drill. The coach will place the two buckets about 45 feet apart. All of the balls are in one of the buckets. This is the bucket that the coach will get his balls from. 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 into the bucket, the coach and players swap ends and the drill starts over.

FIVE PART PROGRESSIVE DRILL

DRILL #1

Players paired. First Basemen down first base line with gloves. Fielders, without gloves, two steps behind second-third baseline and two steps to the right of their first basemen partner. Fielders place ball on baseline. Fielders assume good infield position. On signal, or individually if preferred, fielder advance toward ball aligning at ball with both hands around ball, head down looking at ball, and feet in the manner in which you have coached them. (Note some coaches prefer for the glove side foot to be even with the ball and the throwing side foot about 6 inches behind, others desire the feet to be parallel.) On the count of two, player picks up ball, crow hops toward the first baseman and gets into a ready position to throw ball. (Glove side foot should be pointing toward first baseman, weight should be on back foot, both hands at chest.) On three, if desired, throw should be made. (NOTE: Early season it is sometimes not advisable to make throw for obvious reasons.)

DRILL #2

Start as in DRILL #1. But this time, all fielder places ball to their right or left. Remainder of drill is the same as DRILL #1. These two drills provide opportunity to measure basic fielding fundamentals and emphasize the importance of feet, body and hand position. It also provides the opportunity to check the relationship of the ball to the body when fielded.

DRILL #3

Start as DRILL #1, except fielder keeps ball in hands. On signal fielder rolls ball forward and continues on to field ball. This is reverse motion, but is effective in teaching the fielder not to overrun ball. If fielder over runs ball, he will have to reach between his legs and will excitedly miss the ball as he tries to reach behind him. It is also imperative that the fielder catches the ball the moment he stops. Having the player stop when they catch the ball will also enable a good lesson in the importance of having good body control when stopping to field a ground ball. The remainder of the drill is done as in DRILL #1.

DRILL #4

Start as DRILL #3, except fielder throws ball to right or left.
These drills add movement and work on body control and balance.

DRILL #5

Start as DRILL #1, except have first basemen keep the ball. First baseman throws an easy grounder (Remember fielders do not have gloves.) to fielder. The fielder fields the ball and throws back to first baseman.

It is imperative in these drills that attention be paid to how the fielder fields the ball with their hands. Some may be tempted to pick the ball up with one hand on each side. In doing this, they will have a hesitation in their fielding which will be noticeable. Fielders should field the ball with the glove hand coming in contact first and sort of swooping the ball up with the glove hand moving under the ball and almost pushing it into the throwing hand. This is how one fields with a glove. A fielder who waits for the ball with the glove on the ground and the hand in a 6 o'clock position will miss more balls than he catches. When fielding a ground ball, the glove is brought from a natural 9 o'clock position, sweeping under the ball to a 6 o'clock position, then raising the ball as the throwing hand comes down. When doing progression teaching, you must replicate the task as closely as possible, changing only that which helps teach the part of the skill desired.

These drills give a good take on how well the fielder understands the skill and how well they perform the skill. They can be done fairly quickly with the progression done smoothly. DRILL #5 can be part of the pre-practice/pre-game warm up drills.

DEVELOPING PROPER THROWING MECHANICS

THROWING MECHANICS IN SERIES

This throwing drill is used for warm ups and is done in a series. It allows the players to focus on the "mechanics" of proper throwing techniques, using certain isolation drills.

- 1.) Indian style: have the players start approx. 10-12 yards from their partners sitting indian style. By throwing in this position, the players isolate the upper body motion, using the glove hand for proper shoulder rotation. To help emphasize proper follow through, the players should follow through, with their throwing arm elbow outside their knee, as if picking a blade of grass. (this can also be done in the kneeling position with both knees on the ground, bodies square to their partners.)
- 2.) One Knee: Have the players proceed to the one knee position, stride leg in front pointing towards their partners. The players should move back to approx. 15-20 yards. This focuses on upper body mechanics and accuracy. Again, the players should follow through with their throwing elbows outside their knee with bend in the waist.
- 3.) Standing: Players put all three together and begin throwing from the standing position. Again, emphasize using the glove hand to point at the target as well as proper follow through (throwing wrist should brush the outside of the knee).
- 4.) Crane or Stork: Players begin in the "crane" position. That is, with their stride leg raised in the air (knee bent), their glove hand pointing at their target, their throwing hand in the launch position (ball outside ear), players hold in this position for 2-3 seconds before releasing the ball. To ensure proper follow through, the players then take one full step towards their partner after releasing the throw. This helps the players focus on properly using their glove hand for emphasis on shoulder hip and knee rotation. What I tell the girls is that (if righty), their left shoulder, hip and knee point at their target and when they are done, their right shoulder hip and knee should be pointing at their target.
- 5.) Quick throw: Players work on framing and quick release. Players catch and throw without hesitation for approximately 1-1.5 minutes straight.
- 6.) Tags: While partners are working their "Crane" positioning, the receivers set up in the straddle position. When the throw comes in, they perform sweep tags. This allows the receivers to train as well as the throwers.
- 7.) Throwing for distance: Once the series has gone through, continue to have the players back up until they are able to make accurate, strong throws DIRECTLY to the receiver. No lob throws. This allows arm strengthening.

THREE BALL THROWING MECHANICS

If a player's throwing mechanics are improper, one characteristic of this is the glove hand flying out away from the body and away from the target. This will result in less velocity toward the target and a ball that is offline.

Place 3 balls into the player's glove hand) and have them go through their throwing motion. If the glove hand is flying out of control, the players will not be able to hold the balls in the glove hand and they will fly out. This is instant feedback to the player that a mechanical correction is needed and the coach can correct it immediately. If her mechanics are correct, the balls will be held in the glove hand and no correction is needed.

THROWING FORM

The bringing back of the throwing hand is done is a graceful, arching movement. The hand swings back and up, with the ball facing backward at the top of the arch.

Clock drill -- This can be practised by having someone standing about 5 feet directly behind the thrower. Start with a ball in the glove position (as if the ball were just fielded). Separate the hands with the ball hand swinging first down, then back and up until you throwing arm bicep is parallel with the ground and you have a 90 degree angle with you forearm pointing up and the ball facing backwards. Looking at this motion from the third base side (right handed thrower) the ball hand starts at 9:00 o'clock, swings down to 6:00 o'clock then up to 12:00 o'clock. If the thrower releases the ball at about 3:00 o'clock (for the drill) then the form is correct, and the ball should be easily caught by the person standing behind the thrower. If the ball goes to the left or right of the person behind the thrower, then the proper path is not being used. Practice this drill until you have the proper arm motion, then, instead of releasing the ball, go into your throwing motion, striding with your lead foot and following through.

Load and go drill -- Stand with your weight evenly distributed between both feet and in the position of already haven taken your stride, with hips facing towards third base (right handed thrower). Transfer your weight to the rear foot and lift the front foot off the ground. As you come forward with the ball in the throwing motion, transfer your weight back to your lead foot and make a throw.

This drill can improve accuracy and distance.

THROWING GAMES

Break the window for three points

This is a fun drill which emphasizes throwing accuracy and good competition between players.

I use a simple three point system, but you set it up any way you like. A throw from the head region around the side and down to the waist is worth three points (break the player's window). A throw that is easy to catch, but requires the player to fully extend his arms is worth two points. A throw which requires the player to step to make the catch is worth one. A non-catchable throw is worth zero. The points are scored based on throwing accuracy, don't incorporate negative points for dropped throws. The boy who throws second gets his last turn in order to ensure equal number of throws.

I run this with two players going head-to-head, although you can use more than that if you want. Set a point total (say 15), and let them go for it! This is fun, but it also requires the players to play under pressure. If you are down 15 to 12, you have to come in with a perfect throw. This helps the boy who is throwing to focus on the chest area of the target he is throwing at. Too often a fielder throws to a too general area, and doesn't pick out a specific target. In this drill, the emphasis is on "breaking the player's window".

Star drill

Infielders go to their position (except the pitcher). The ball starts at the catcher, she/he throws to the second baseman; throws to the third baseman; throws to the first baseman; throws to the short stop; and throws back to the catcher. The whole time this is going on you have a runner run the bases. The runner leaves at the same time as the catcher starts the cycle.

It starts out easy for the fielders because they tend to start in kind of close and creep in. You can let them do that for a while, until it gets too easy, then make them start backing up. After they get a few steps closer to the grass, the faster runners start making it close. (the runners like to see a dropped or missed ball)

This really helps on the infielder's learning to develop "quick hands" – catch with two hands in order to get rid of the ball quickly.

Cut-Off Relay

Great for building skills, speed, accuracy and confidence.

This drill is a great skill builder. There will be at least 5 players on a team. They line up about 30 feet apart and stretch about 120 feet across the field. You will have two teams or "lines" competing against each other. Have an outfielder on the one end and a catcher on the opposite end. The drill will start for both lines at the same time. The first team to take the ball to the other end and get it back is the winner. The ball must be caught and thrown by each player in the line. Teams may not skip a man. The catchers should practice catching and tagging a runner. The middle players should be taught to properly "round" the ball, make a proper relay catch and quick

throw to the next player. Do this drill where the winning team does 5 push ups and the other teams do 10 push ups or squat thrusts.

Catcher-----x-----x-----x-----Outfielder

The distances should be matched to the age. You may also have the outfielder let the ball go and hit the fence before he goes to retrieve it and make his throw to the cut-off player. You may also want to make this a "total team" drill with the whole team having to catch and throw the ball to cover a long distance. If you have the room to do this, it is great to have the team work together to beat the clock. They must beat a set time or they "pay". You may also want to have the "line" make more than one trip down and back. It is great to make each "line" take the ball to the other end three times.