

Season Plan for 10 to 11-Year-Olds

The tactics and skills progress to deeper levels as the kids gain in size and experience. The same fundamentals are stressed as were for 8 and 9-year-olds, but players stretch their base-running tactics and fielding skills as they mature. They are also learning how to pitch. The outline on pages 73-74 provides an overview of each component of practice from week 1 through Week 12.

Overview of the Season Plan

The Season Plan on the next page provides a weekly guide and addresses tactical and skill components, and other activities fully detailed in the Practice Plans document. The Season Plan has five components:

- **Purpose:** The purpose of the practice is your main focus.
- **Tactics and Skills:** Tactics are knowing what to do during the game (and when to do it), and they require an understanding of the problems faced by each team during the game and how those problems can be solved. Ways to maintain possession of the ball would be tactics. Skills are the physical skills traditionally taught, such as passing or shooting the ball or controlling the ball during play.
- **Rules and Traditions:** You will teach the rules of the sport to young children gradually, as part of playing games and learning skills. Traditions are those unwritten rules that players follow to be courteous and safe, such as raising your hand when you foul someone or playing cooperatively with the others on your team.
- **Fitness Concepts:** Even young children can understand some simple concepts about health and fitness, such as the idea that exercise strengthens your heart, so some of these are suggested as the focus for brief discussions during practice.
- **Character Development Concepts:** The four core values—caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility—can all be related to many situations arising while playing basketball. For example, playing cooperatively with teammates shows that you care about them. Again, we'll suggest some specific ideas for briefly discussing character development values.

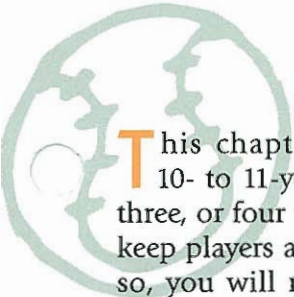
10- to 11-Year-Olds

Week	Purpose	Tactics and skills	Rules and traditions	Fitness concepts	Character development concepts
1A	To defend in the infield on ground balls.	Fielding grounders; throwing to first base; covering first base; running to first base.	Infield positions; running to first base.	General fitness The difference between physical fitness and physical activity.	Four core values We'll stress caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.
1B	To defend in the infield on ground balls.	Hitting; fielding grounders; throwing to first base; pitcher covering first base.	Running outside basepath.	General fitness It's important to warm up before physical activity.	Caring Always help both teammates and opponents if they are hurt.
2A	To defend second base in force situations.	Covering second base on a force play; running from first to second base.	Baserunning; infield fly; force play.	Cardiorespiratory fitness The heart transports oxygen through the body.	Responsibility It's responsible to be ready for practice and games.
2B	To defend third base in tag situations.	Covering third base on a tag play; hitting; running bases.	Review interference and pitching rules.	Cardiorespiratory fitness Cardiorespiratory fitness is improved by running.	Respect Always show respect for your opponents as well as your teammates.
3	To defend third base in tag situations.	Covering third base on a tag play; running from second to third base.	Pitching; batting; balls and strikes.	General fitness You need to exercise every day, not just the days you have practice.	Respect Respect officials and thank them at the end of games.
4	To defend on balls hit to the outfield with a runner on first.	Fielding in the outfield; backing up a play in the outfield; covering second base on a throw from the outfield; increasing bat speed.	Outfield positions; tagging up; sacrifice fly.	Muscular strength and endurance Different muscles perform different activities.	Honesty Strive to be honest and avoid dishonesty.
5	To defend on balls hit to the infield and outfield with runners on first and second.	Covering third base; running from second to third base.		Flexibility Stretching improves flexibility and helps prevent injury.	Responsibility It's every player's responsibility to try to get into position to help teammates.
6	To defend on ground balls with runners on second and third.	Holding runners at second and third base; looking runner back; running technique to delay throw to first base.	Running bases; overthrows.	Safety It's important to use safety equipment to prevent injury.	Caring Compliment your teammates and opponents when they make good plays.

10- to 11-Year-Olds (continued)

Week	Purpose	Tactics and skills	Rules and traditions	Fitness concepts	Character development concepts
7	To defend in the outfield, holding runners on second on fly-outs.	Catching fly balls; getting balls back quickly to infield; communicating with teammates; tagging up.	Tag play; overthrows.	Training and conditioning If you work your body a little harder than last time, it will adapt and become stronger.	Respect It's important to respect yourself and your teammates by always playing safely.
8	To defend at third base on balls hit to the infield or outfield.	Covering third base; running bases.		Flexibility You should feel a slight pull but no pain when stretching.	Caring It's important to behave in ways that show you care about your teammates.
9	To defend on force plays in various situations.	Making force plays; running bases; backing up bases and players.		Training and conditioning An emphasis on training the specific muscles you use for your sport is called "specificity training."	Responsibility Work to improve your skills.
10	To defend tag plays in various situations.	Making tag plays; running bases; backing up bases.		Healthy habits Try to choose meals from the bottom of the food pyramid.	Honesty Good players look honestly at themselves and think of ways to improve.
11	To defend in the infield and outfield, executing proper backups.	Backing up bases and players.	Maximum-run rule.	Healthy habits Healthy habits help you perform better.	Responsibility We win as a team and we lose as a team.
12	To defend in the infield and outfield in various situations.	Executing skills and understanding tactics.		Training and conditioning Stay in shape after the season's over.	Caring It's important to forgive people for their mistakes.

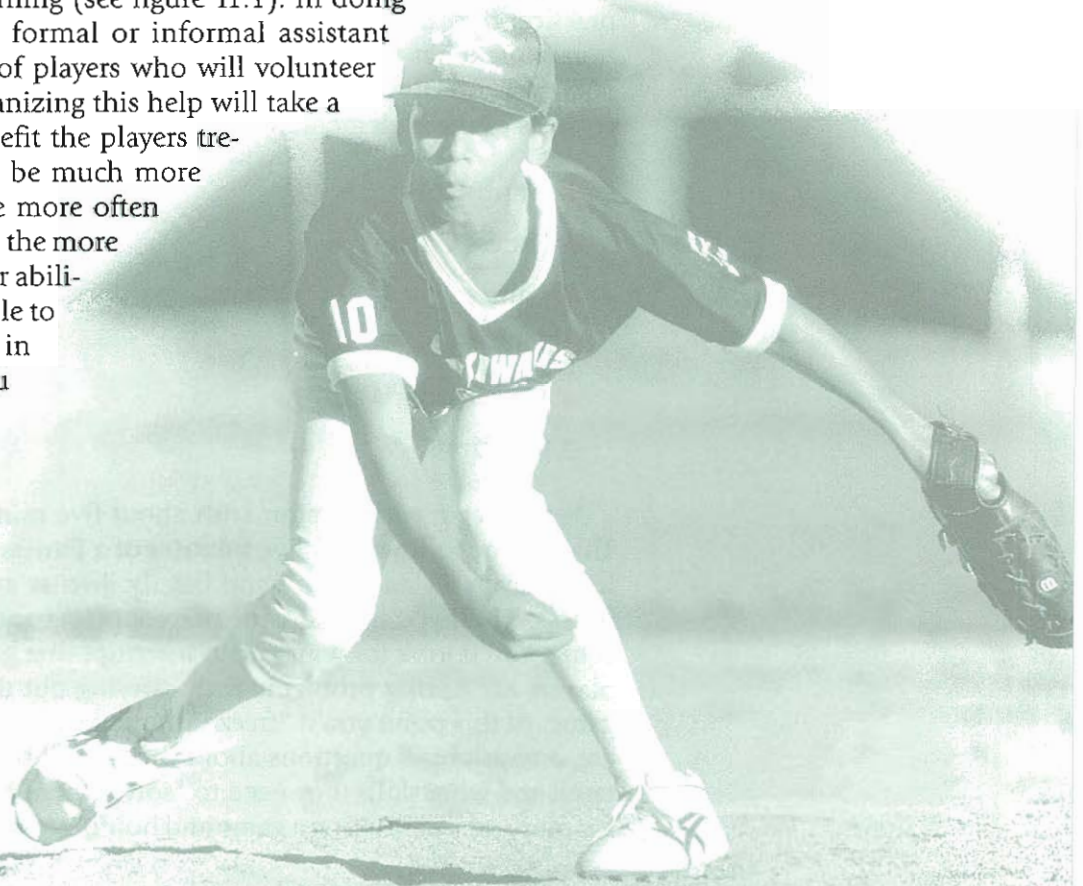
Practice Plans for 10- to 11-Year-Olds



This chapter contains the 14 Practice Plans you'll use with your 10- to 11-year-old YMCA Winners baseball or softball players. Use two, three, or four task stations in a cloverleaf, with 4 to 8 players per station, to keep players active and learning (see figure 11.1). In doing so, you will need to have formal or informal assistant coaches—perhaps parents of players who will volunteer their time to help out. Organizing this help will take a bit of work, but it will benefit the players tremendously, because they'll be much more active during practices. The more often they practice a tactic or skill, the more likely they will develop their abilities. In fact, you won't be able to run the stations as outlined in the Practice Plans if you don't have additional adult support. Don't assign parents to task stations where their own children are playing, however.

Each plan contains the following sections:

- ☉ Purpose
- ☉ Equipment
- ☉ Practice Plan



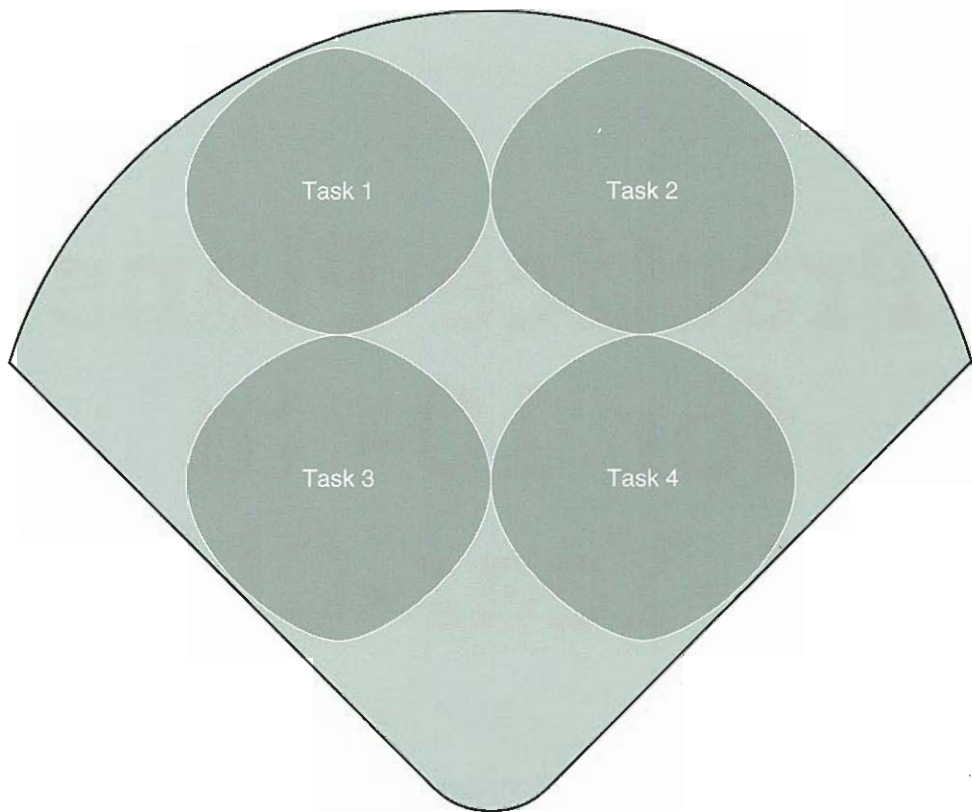


Figure 11.1 Set up task stations in a cloverleaf pattern to maximize space on the field.

Purpose sections focus on what you want to teach your players during each practice; they outline your main “theme” for each practice. *Equipment* sections note what you’ll need to have on hand for that practice. The *Practice Plan* sections outline what you will do during each practice session. Each consists of these elements:

- ⊙ Warm-Up
- ⊙ Fitness Circle
- ⊙ Games
- ⊙ Skill Practices
- ⊙ Team Circle/Wrap-Up
- ⊙ Variations

You’ll begin each session with about five minutes of warm-up activities. This will be followed by five minutes of a Fitness Circle, during which you’ll lead players in an activity and briefly discuss an item that relates to their fitness. Then you’ll have your players play a modified baseball or softball game. You’ll look for your cue to interrupt that game—your cue being when players are having problems with carrying out the basic goal or aim of the game. At this point you’ll “freeze” the action, keeping the players where they are, and ask brief questions about the tactical problems the players encountered and what skills they need to “solve” those problems. (Review chapter 8 for more on interrupting a game and holding a question-and-answer session.)

We provide discussion questions in each Practice Plan section. In addition, we provide coaching points, when appropriate, with Game and Skill Practice sections to help you conduct each practice most effectively.

Then, you'll teach the skill the players need to acquire to successfully execute the tactic. Chapter 13 contains descriptions of all the skills, so a page reference will be given to guide you to the appropriate description. During this Skill Practice session, you'll use the IDEA approach:

- ⊙ Introduce the skill.
- ⊙ Demonstrate the skill.
- ⊙ Explain the skill.
- ⊙ Attend to players' practicing the skill.

Your introduction, demonstration, and explanation of a skill should take no more than 2 to 3 minutes; then you'll attend to players and provide teaching cues or further demonstration as necessary as they practice the skill according to the Practice Plan.

After the Skill Practices, you will usually have the athletes play another game or two to let them use the skills they have just learned and to understand them in the context of a game. During Game and Skill Practices, emphasize the importance of every player on the field moving and being involved in every play, whether they will be directly touching the ball or backing up their teammates. No player on the field should be standing around.

The Practice Plan section continues with a Team Circle that focuses on character development. After players cool down and stretch, you will talk to your players about some aspect of baseball or softball that relates to one of the four core values—caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. Following this, you'll wrap up the practice with a few summary comments and remind them of the next practice or game day.

The Practice Plan concludes with a Variations section to help you modify the Game and Skill Practice sections. These suggestions will help you keep practices fun and provide for players with varying skill levels.

A note about Fitness and Team Circles: These times are meant to be true discussions—not lectures where you're doing all the talking and your players are doing all the listening. Ask the questions provided, then wait for your players to respond. Don't immediately feed them the answers we provide. These answers are meant simply to help you guide the discussion. Your role in Team Circles is as much to ask questions and get players to respond as it is to dole out information.

Following are Practice Plans for the 2 weeks of your preseason and then for the 10 weeks of your competitive season.

Key to Diagrams

P = Pitcher

C = Catcher

1B = First baseman

2B = Second baseman

3B = Third baseman

SS = Shortstop

LF = Left-fielder

CF = Center-fielder

RF = Right-fielder

SF = Short-fielder

R = Runner

———— = Path of ball hit

————→ = Movement of player

----→ = Path of ball thrown

X = Player

~~~~→ = Path of ball rolled on ground

B = Batter

☐C = Coach

☐AC = Assistant coach

⊔ = Batting tee

△ = Cone

( ) = Optional player

# Week 1—Practice 1

## PURPOSE

To defend in the infield when no runners are on base and a ground ball is hit. The focus is on fielding grounders, making accurate throws to first base, and covering first base properly.

## Equipment

- Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- Four batting tees
- Five balls per tee
- One glove per player
- One ball per player (minimum)
- Two cones

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

- Begin each practice with about five minutes of warm-up activities to get players loosened up and ready to go.
- Jog once around the bases. Play catch with a partner.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Following the warm-up, gather the players and lead them through a series of stretches for the major muscle groups (see chapter 15 for stretches). After you lead them in stretches, briefly discuss the fitness concept for that practice.

### Key Idea: General fitness

Gather team into a group between two cones about 20 feet apart. “Do you think there’s a difference between physical activity and physical fitness?” Listen to their responses. “Physical *activity* is any body movement you use while performing a skill or task. Physical *fitness* is a condition of the body. The more fit your body is, the better you can perform some skills and tasks. I will give you some activities. Run to this cone if you think it is regular physical activity. Run to the other cone if you think it is an activity done for fitness.” Examples of physical activity are walking to school and walking stairs to bed. Examples of activities done for fitness are walking to school for exercise, jogging to improve sport performance, or walking stairs to strengthen leg muscles. “All season we will talk and learn about the different areas of fitness during our Fitness Circles. We’ll also work on improving your body’s fitness for playing ball.”

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

- Following the Fitness Circle, get the kids playing a game. Follow most games with a time of questions and answers—with *you* asking the questions and your *players* providing the answers (about what the goal of the game was and what skills and tactics they needed to perform to succeed in the game). For many games, we provide diagrams or figures showing how the game is begun. We also often provide “coaching points” for you to pass along to your players during the games.

# Week 1—Practice 1

## “Zero-Zero” (zero outs and zero runners on base)

### Goals

Infielders will field grounders and throw the runner out at first base. The runner tries to make it safely to first (see page 85 for a diagram).

### Description

Set up an infield (or two); briefly discuss infield positions (see page 303). Play a 6 v 6 game (you can use fewer players per team). The batting team hits off a tee or coach. Batters must hit grounders to the infield. Players score a point by reaching first base safely. The side is retired after three points or three outs, whichever comes first. Each team should keep track of the points scored and compare the score to the score of Game 2.

### For running to first

- “Step and drive!”
- “Run hard outside the line!”
- “Watch the coach!”
- “Run all the way through the base!”
- “Round first on the signal!” (Or, “Advance to second on the signal!”)

### For covering first base

- “Position between ball and base.”
- “Foot opposite glove hand on outside edge of base.”
- “Provide a good target.”
- “Watch it into the glove!”

**Coach:** When the throw was not in time, how close was the play?

**Players:** Within one step.

**Coach:** What could you have done to get the ball to first more quickly?

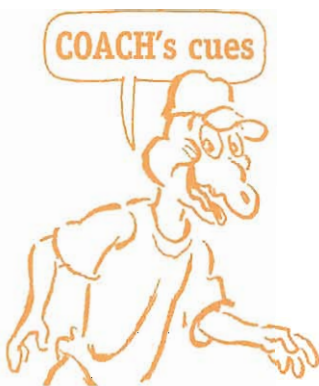
**Players:** Charge the ball, keep feet moving to target until you’re ready to step and throw, and make a smooth transition from catch to throw.

**Coach:** When you were the batter and you were out, how close was the play?

**Players:** Less than a step.

**Coach:** What could you do to get to first quicker?

**Players:** Get out of the box quicker, run faster, run straight, run fast over the base.



## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

You’ll follow Game 1 with a Skill Practice, during which you’ll introduce, demonstrate, and explain a skill or tactic, and then attend to your

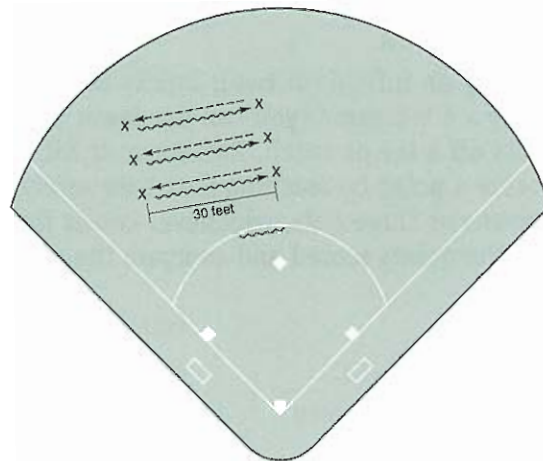


# Week 1—Practice 1 (cont'd)

players as they practice that tactic. The question-and-answer session, in which your players tell *you* what skills and tactics they needed to be successful in the game (instead of you telling them), leads directly to the Skill Practice. We often provide coaching points with the Skill Practices; pass these points along to your players. We also provide “coaching cues”—phrases to help your players focus on the task at hand—during many Skill Practice and Game sections.

## Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)


1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *field a ground ball* (see page 290) and how to *throw accurately* (see page 275).
2. Practice fielding grounders and throwing.





### Description

Players in pairs stand about 30 feet apart. One partner rolls the ball to the other partner five times in a row; the other partner fields the ball and throws the ball back as quickly as possible. After five tries, players switch roles. If both partners field 4 of 5 balls quickly and under control and make accurate throws (within one step of the person catching the ball), both should take one giant step back and repeat the drill.



 You can run Skill Practices in sequence or concurrently as stations, but you'll have to run Skill Practice 4 concurrently with another Skill Practice. Pitchers and catchers can participate in Skill Practices 1 and/or 2, then complete Skill Practice 4.

 Be patient. The first practice generally takes some time to get organized. Make sure players (and assistant coaches) know what you want them to do, how you want them to do it, and why.

 Use only the number of players necessary to perform the drill or game. Don't have players standing in line.

### COACH'S cues



### Fielding grounders

- “Ready position!”
- “Feet to the ball!”
- “Glove on the ground!”
- “Catch and cover!” (with nonglove hand)

### Throwing

- “Bring the ball way back!”
- “Step with the opposite foot!”
- “Follow through to the target!”

### For advanced players

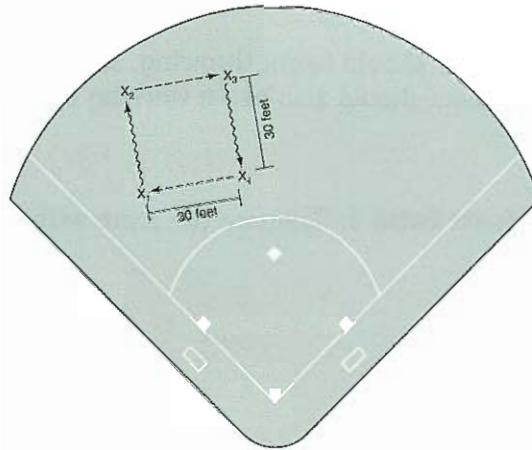
- “Charge the ball!”
- “Look the ball into the glove!”
- “One smooth move from catch to throw!”
- “Keep the feet moving to the target!”
- “Step and throw!”

# Week 1—Practice 1

## Skill Practice 2 (10 minutes)

### Description

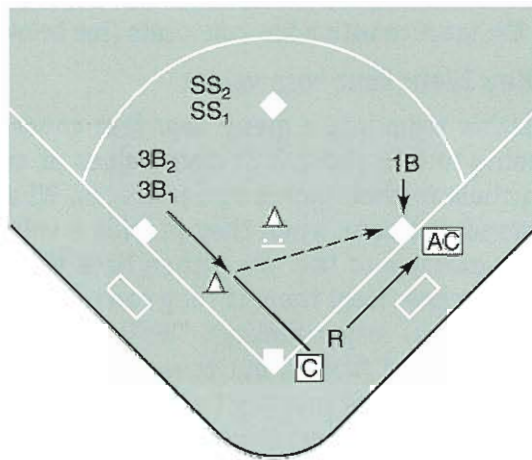
Players practice fielding and throwing. Four players form a square, with a person at each corner. The first player rolls the ball to the player to his or her left. That player fields the grounder and quickly throws the ball to the next player on the left. That player then rolls the ball to the next player on the left, who fields and throws quickly to the next player, and so on. After five times around the square, the players exchange rolling and throwing roles.



## Skill Practice 3 (20 minutes)

### Description

Players practice fielding and throwing. Place two players at shortstop and two players at third base, one behind the other. (They will take turns fielding the ball.) Also include a first base player. Extra players serve as runners. Place one cone halfway between home plate and third base and another cone on the pitcher's mound. Hit ground balls, alternating between third base and shortstop. Fielders should charge the ball and attempt to field it before it reaches the imaginary line between the cones, then make the play at first base. Another coach or parent should be at first base to assist the first base player with proper footwork and to give feedback to the runners (running outside the basepath, running hard to first, watching the coach, running over the base without leaping). After three trials at each position, players rotate. Discuss the *running out of the baseline* rule (see page 298) and running bases in general.



## Skill Practice 4 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *pitch* (see pages 279 and 283) and *catch* (see page 286).
2. Practice pitching and catching.

# Week 1—Practice 1 (cont'd)



☞ If possible, assign a coach or parent to be in charge of pitchers and catchers, because their practice should be closely monitored and controlled.



## Description

Pitchers should begin throwing, *slow* to *moderate* speed. Focus on form. Catchers should also begin working on technique.

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat Game 1. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

## Team Circle (5 minutes)

Conclude practice by gathering your players and leading them through the same stretches you led them through in the Fitness Circle. After stretching, discuss a character development concept. These aren't lectures; you want your players' active participation in these discussions and activities. Following the discussion, wrap up the practice with a few comments (see below).

### Key Idea: Four core values

Gather team into a group near four cones about five feet apart. "We're going to talk about four main values or qualities that good players include in their games and practices. What are the four?" Have players stand at a cone when they provide a value. Have another player provide an example of the value, then have that player join the other player at the cone. Help them if they can't think of all four (caring, honesty, respect, responsibility). "We'll work to improve our skills and physical fitness, but these four values are just as important to learn and practice to help you become good players. We will learn about these values during our Team Circles."

### Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and remind players of the next practice.

## Variations

- Work with pitchers and catchers for about 30 minutes after practice, if possible. This allows them to learn skills and tactics along with the rest of the team. Also monitor how much each pitcher has thrown during practice.
- If you have a number of players without previous experience, put them on a separate field and provide them with some one-on-one (one coach to one player) or one-on-two attention.
- Games may be played 4 v 4 or 5 v 5, depending on the number of players you have to work with.

# Week 1—Practice 2

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Jog once around the bases. Play catch with a partner.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: General fitness

Gather team into a group. “Who can tell me what ‘warm up’ means?” Listen to their responses. They might mention getting the body ready to do more strenuous activity, increasing blood circulation, and moving muscles so they are more flexible and will help prevent injuries. Discuss their responses and other possible responses. “Raise your hand if you think the muscles actually get warmer during warm-up activities?” Listen to their responses. “They do get warmer from the blood circulating and your moving. Give me some examples of good warm-up activities.” Choose one for the team to try. “The warm-up is an important part of a good fitness program. We will do a warm-up activity every practice.”

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

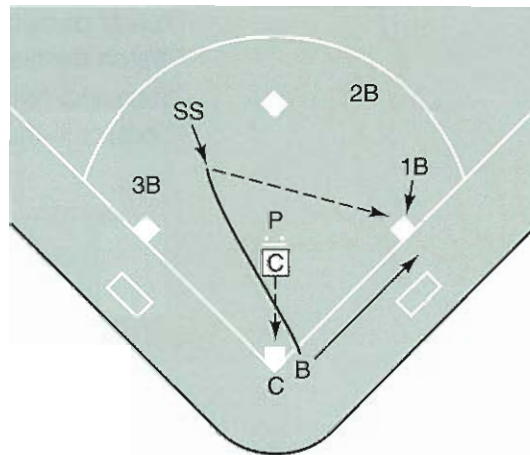
“Zero-Zero”  
(zero outs and  
zero runners on base)

### Goals

Infielders will field grounders and throw the runner out at first base. The runner tries to make it safely to first.

### Description

Set up an infield (or two). Play a 6 v 6 game (you can use fewer players per team). The batting team hits off a tee or coach. Batters must hit grounders to the infield. Players score a point by reaching first base safely. The side is retired after three points or three outs, whichever



## PURPOSE

To defend in the infield when no runners are on base and a ground ball is hit. The focus is on fielding grounders, making accurate throws to first base, and covering first base properly, including having the pitcher cover first.

## Equipment

- Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- Four batting tees
- Five balls per tee
- One glove per player
- One ball per player (minimum)

# Week 1—Practice 2 (cont'd)

- comes first. Each team should keep track of the runs scored and compare the score to the score of Game 2.

Coach: When the throw was not in time, how close was the play?

Players: **Within one step.**

Coach: What could you have done to get the ball to first more quickly?

Players: **Charge the ball, keep feet moving to target until you're ready to step and throw, smooth transition from catch to throw.**



## Skill Practice (40 minutes)


### Skill Practice 1

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *hit* (see page 268).
2. Practice hitting.

#### Description

Set up batting tees within 5 feet of a fence (see page 86 for a diagram). Batters hit into the fence. Each player takes 10 hits in a row and then rotates. One player gives feedback and instruction. The next hitter retrieves balls and places them on the tee for the batter. Remind players about safety: Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter.



 You can run Skill Practices in sequence or concurrently as stations, but you'll have to run Skill Practice 4 concurrently with another Skill Practice. Pitchers and catchers can participate in Skill Practices 1 and/or 2, then complete Skill Practice 4.

#### COACH'S cues



"Ready position!"  
"Watch the ball on the batting tee!"  
"Step and swing fast!"  
"Contact in the power zone!"

### Skill Practice 2

#### Description

Players practice fielding and throwing. Four players form a square, with a person at each corner (see page 135 for a diagram). The first player rolls the ball to the player to his or her left. That player fields the grounder and quickly throws the ball to the next player on the left. That player then rolls the ball to the next player on the left, who fields and throws quickly to the next player, and so on. After five times around the square, the players exchange rolling and throwing roles.

# Week 1—Practice 2

## COACH'S cues



### Fielding grounders

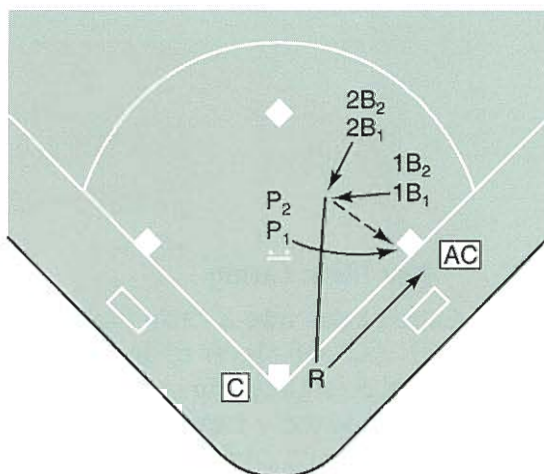
- “Ready position!”
- “Feet to the ball!”
- “Glove on the ground!”
- “Catch and cover!” (with nonglove hand)

### For throwing

- “Bring the ball way back!”
- “Step with the opposite foot!”
- “Follow through to the target!”

## Skill Practice 3

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how the pitcher covers first base (see page 290).
2. Practice fielding, throwing, and backing up.



### Description

Place two players at second base, two players at pitcher, and two players at first base, one behind the other (they will take turns fielding the ball). Extra players serve as runners. Hit ground balls, alternating among second base, first base, and the pitcher. Fielders should charge the ball, field it, and make the play at first base. Another coach or parent should be at first base to assist the first base player with proper footwork and to give feedback to the runners (running outside the basepath, running hard to first, watching the coach, running over the base without leaping). After three trials at each position, players rotate. Discuss the *running out of the baseline* rule (see page 298) and running bases in general.

## COACH'S cues



### For running to first


- “Step and drive!”
- “Run hard outside the line!”
- “Watch the coach!”
- “Run all the way through the base!”
- “Round first on the signal!” (Or, “Advance to second on the signal!”)

### For covering first base

- “Position between ball and base.”
- “Foot opposite glove hand on outside edge of base.”
- “Provide a good target.”
- “Watch it into the glove!”

# Week 1—Practice 2 <sup>(cont'd)</sup>



 Pitchers and catchers can participate in one or two other Skill Practices, then complete Skill Practice 4.

## Skill Practice 4 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

### Description

Pitchers practice pitching. They should throw at *slow* to *moderate* speed, focusing on form. Catchers should also work on technique.

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat Game 1. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

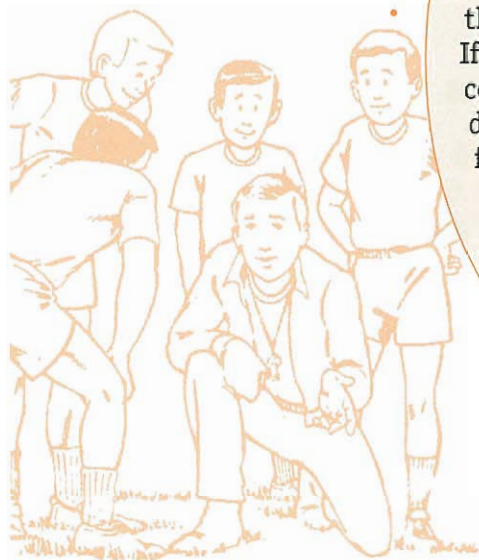
## Team Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Caring

Gather team into a circle near two cones about 10 feet apart. Ask one player to demonstrate with you. Have the player accidentally trip you. Fall down as if you are hurt. “Anna accidentally tripped me. What should she do? If you think she should apologize and help me up, stand at this cone. If you think she should keep playing, stand at this cone.” Encourage all players to vote. Discuss why they voted the way they did. Tactfully explain the “caring action” so players don’t feel foolish for not realizing they should help. “When you accidentally trip or hurt other players—opponents *or* teammates—it’s important to help them up to see if they are okay. That shows that you care about other players.”

### Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and remind players of the next practice.



## Variations

- Players waiting to bat can practice bat speed or do strengthening exercises such as push-ups or wrist rolls.
- Games may be played 4 v 4 or 5 v 5, depending on the number of players you have to work with.

# Week 2—Practice 1

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Jog once around the bases. Play catch with a partner. After about five minutes, throw grounders back and forth between partners.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Cardiorespiratory fitness

Gather team into a group. "Who can tell me what *cardiorespiratory fitness* is?" When you have good cardiorespiratory fitness, your heart picks up oxygen from your lungs and takes it all over your body. Ask four players to demonstrate. Have one ball ready. The players should be spread out in a zigzag line; the ball will be rolled down the line. Stagger players so the ball is passed across to each other, one side then the other side, in the line. "Let's set up our own blood vessel to carry oxygen to the muscles."

Set up and perform activity, with player 1 being the heart, player 2 the lungs, player 3 the legs, and then back to player 1. "We need to run more to improve our body's ability to get oxygen to our muscles. That is improving our cardiorespiratory fitness."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

### "Movin' on Up"

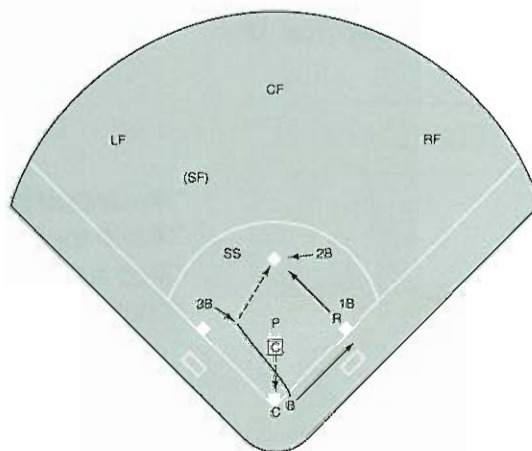
#### Goals

The offense tries to advance the runner to second base. The defense tries to get the runner out at second base.

#### Description

Set up an infield (or two).

Play a 6 v 6 game (you can use more players per team). The batting teams start with a runner at first base. Batters hit off a tee or coach and run to first base. If the runner gets to second base safely, the offense scores a point. The runner can continue to run and score again



### PURPOSE

To defend in the infield, executing force plays at second base. The focus is on proper execution on the force play as well as proper baserunning.

### Equipment

- Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- Four batting tees
- Five balls per tee
- One glove per player
- One ball per player (minimum)



# Week 2—Practice 1 (cont'd)

- by crossing home plate. The fielding team attempts to get the runner out at second base. The side is retired after three points or three outs, whichever comes first. Teams should keep score and compare their scores in Game 2.



**Coach:** What was the goal of the game if you were an infielder?

**Players:** Get the runner out at second base.

**Coach:** Who covered the base if the ball was hit to the right side? Left side?

**Players:** Shortstop (right side); second base player (left side).

**Coach:** When running from first to second base, how do you know when to take off? How to stop quickly?

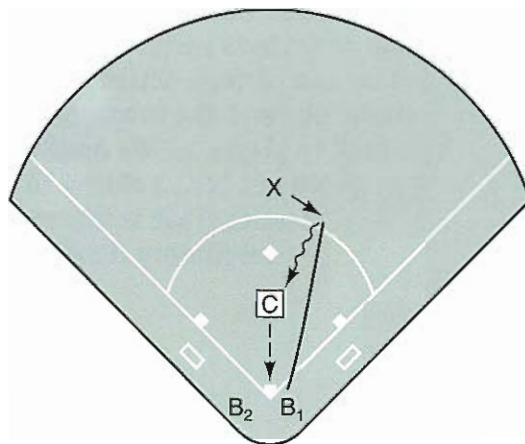
**Players:** Take off when the batter hits the ball. Stop quickly by leaning back; bending hips, knees, and ankles to absorb force; and holding onto the base with your foot.

## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

Players practice hitting. Each player takes 10 swings and then rotates. One player gives feedback and instruction. Another player retrieves balls and rolls them back to the coach. Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter.



#### COACH'S cues



“Ready position!”

“Watch the ball out of the pitcher’s hand!”

“Step and swing fast!”

“Contact in the power zone!”

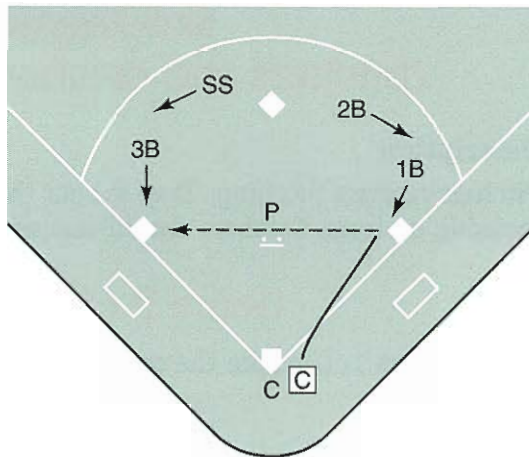
# Week 2—Practice 1

## Skill Practice 2

### Description

Infielders practice fielding and throwing. Hit or throw balls onto the infield, alternating among grounders, pop-ups, and line drives. Make players cover ground to get to the ball. Players field and throw to the base you designate. Players rotate after three trials at each

position. Focus on backups, charging the ball, and quick transitions from catching to throwing. Review the *infield fly rule* (see page 297).



## Skill Practice 3

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to make a *force play* (see page 256).
2. Practice force plays at second base.

### Description

Place players at first, second, third, and shortstop. Extra players serve as runners. Place a runner at first base. The runner takes off on your signal and continues to second base. Hit ground balls, alternating among the four infield positions. Fielders charge and field the ball, then make an accurate throw to second base. Place another coach or parent at first base to offer instruction and feedback to the first and second base players. After three trials at each position, players rotate. Review rules related to the *force play* (see page 256) and when a runner can leave the base (see tables 14.1 and 14.2, pages 300 and 301, respectively).

### COACH'S cues



### For catching ball on a force-out

- “Position between ball and base!”
- “Foot opposite glove hand on outside edge of the base!”
- “Provide a good target!”
- “Watch it into the glove!”

### For baserunning


- “Take off on contact!”
- “Run hard!”



☞ Encourage players to start in their proper positions so that the practice is more gamelike. Don't let them sneak closer to the base so they won't have so far to run to make the play.

# Week 2—Practice 1 (cont'd)



 Pitchers and catchers can participate in one or two other Skill Practices, then complete Skill Practice 4.

## Skill Practice 4 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

### Description

Pitchers practice pitching. They should throw at *slow* to *moderate* speed, focusing on form. Catchers should also work on technique.

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat Game 1. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

## Team Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Responsibility

Gather players into a group. Have a clipboard and act as if you are writing or working. Do not pay attention to the group. Continue for one minute. "Hello, everybody. Now I am ready to talk about our Team Circle for today. How did you feel having to wait for me to get ready to talk to you?" Listen to responses. "Waiting for someone to be ready during practice wastes time. Even if it is a coach. I demonstrated how time is wasted if someone isn't prepared for practice. I read and prepare before practice so I am ready. I want you to do the same. You have a responsibility to the team to be ready when it is time for every practice to start. What do you do at home to get ready for practice?" Discuss responses.

### Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and give reminders for the next practice.



## Variations

- Perform the practices for Weeks 4 and 5 before performing this practice.
- Set up a situation similar to Skill Practice 3 in which players have to flip the ball to the player covering second base.
- Advanced players can work on turning a double play, perhaps on a separate field.

# Week 2—Practice 2

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Jog once around the bases. Play catch with a partner.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Cardiorespiratory fitness

Gather team into a circle. "What fitness area improves when we run more and strengthen our heart and lungs? *Cardiorespiratory fitness*. When we run more during practice to improve our cardiorespiratory fitness, what will start to happen?" Listen to their responses. Discuss getting fatigued if they run too fast early in the practice. "If you don't want to tire early in the practice, we can use a special test to help you judge how fast to run. It's called a talk test. A talk test can tell you if you're running too fast for your body and need to slow down.

Everyone jog around the bases, and while you're running say, 'single-double-triple-homer.'

You should not be out of breath while you're talking; if you are, slow down!"

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

### "Zero-Zero"

(zero outs and zero runners on base)

### Goals

Infielders will field grounders and throw the runner out at first base. The runner tries to make it safely to first.

### Description

Set up an infield (or two) (see page 137 for a diagram). Play a 6 v 6 game (you can use fewer players per team). The batting team hits off a tee or coach. Batters must hit grounders to the infield. Players score a point by reaching first base safely and, if possible, may continue to advance (though they don't score extra points by advancing). The side is retired after three points or three outs, whichever comes first. Each team should keep track of the points scored and compare the score to the score of Game 2.


### PURPOSE

To defend third base in tag situations as well as to demonstrate proper hitting and baserunning techniques.

### Equipment

- Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- Four batting tees
- Five balls per tee
- One glove per player
- One ball per player (minimum)



-  Encourage players to communicate on every play in the Game and Skill Practice parts of practice.

# Week 2—Practice 2 (cont'd)



**Coach:** What's the difference between a force play and a tag play?

**Players:** A force play is when the runner must run to the next base, and a tag play is when the runner can choose to advance or stay on their current base. In a force play, the fielder tags the base; in a tag play, the fielder tags the runner.

**Coach:** How effectively did your team keep runners off base or keep them from advancing?

**Players:** Sometimes, but not always.

**Coach:** How often were runners out by a step or less at first base?

**Players:** Often, usually very close plays.

**Coach:** What are some things the batter can do to get to first base quickly?

**Players:** Get out of the box quickly, run hard and fast, run "through" the base.

## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

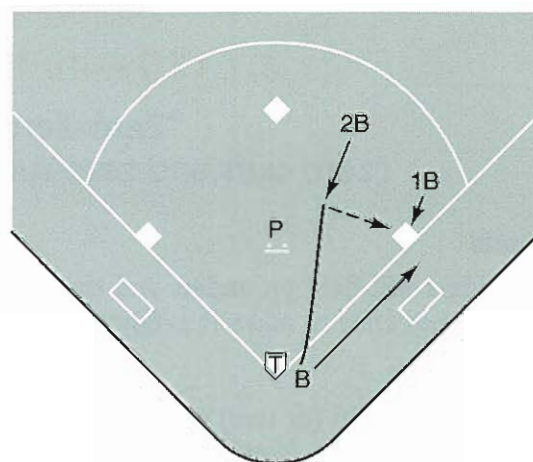
#### Description

Players practice hitting. Set up batting tees within 5 feet of a fence (see page 86 for a diagram). Batters hit into the fence. Each player takes 10 hits in a row and then rotates. One player gives feedback and instruction. The next hitter retrieves balls and places them on the tee for the batter. Remind players about safety: Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter. Players on deck should take 10 to 20 practice swings, working on technique and timing.

### Skill Practice 2

#### Description

Practice force plays at first base. Play a 3 v 3 game with a pitcher, second and first base players, and three batters. Batters hit from a tee. They must hit grounders to the right side of the infield. Batters take turns, each getting three at-bats; they score a point every time they reach first safely. Players rotate positions each inning. The game is completed after three innings or 15 minutes, whichever comes first.

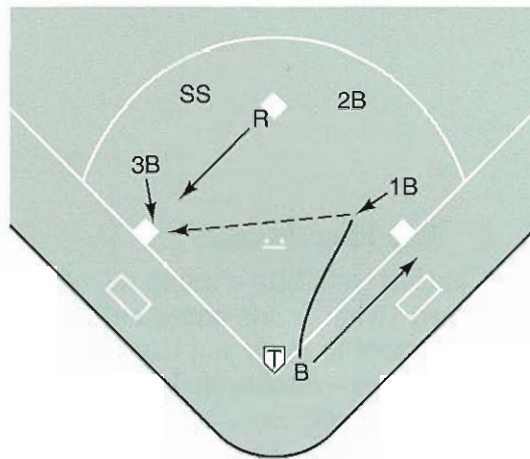


**As needed,** review who covers first and how to cover first. Also review *defensive* and *offensive interference* rules as needed (see pages 296 and 297, respectively).

# Week 2—Practice 2

## Skill Practice 3

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to make a *tag play* (see page 259).
2. Practice tag plays at third base.



### Description

Play a game with players at first, second, third, and shortstop and three batters. The offense begins with a runner on second at all times. Batters hit from a tee. They must hit ground balls and run to first. The runner on second should advance to third and must be tagged out.

### COACH'S cues



- “Select your position!” (depending on angle of incoming ball)
- “Ready position!”
- “Straddle the base!”
- “Watch the ball into the glove!”
- “Catch firmly!”
- “Sweep low!”

## Skill Practice 4 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

### Description

Pitchers practice pitching. They should throw at *slow* to *moderate* speed, focusing on form. Catchers should also work on technique. Review rules related to *pitching* (see pages 279 and 283).

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat Game 1. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

COACH'S  
point

Some players will have difficulty controlling the ball off the tee. Help them focus on body positioning as well as where to contact the ball.

COACH'S  
point

Pitchers and catchers can participate in one or two other Skill Practices, then complete Skill Practice 4.

## Week 2—Practice 2 (cont'd)

### Team Circle (5 minutes)

#### Key Idea: Respect

Gather team into a group near two cones about 10 feet apart. "What is one important thing you can do at the end of every game to show you have respect for your opponent?" Listen to responses—discuss shaking or slapping hands, saying "good game." "Let's say some kids on the other team start walking away following a game. What should you do? If you think you should let them walk away without saying anything or trying to shake hands, stand at this cone. If you think you should say 'good game' and hold your hand out anyway, stand at this cone." All players should choose. Ask why they chose as they did. "You should shake hands or say 'good game' after every game—it shows respect for your opponent. If the other team turns away and doesn't participate, you shouldn't change your behavior."

#### Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and remind players of the next practice.



### Variations

Run Skill Practices 1 and 2 simultaneously, focusing on both offense and defense.

# Week 3

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Jog twice around the bases. Play catch with a partner.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: General fitness

Gather team into a group. "If you participate in practice every week, do you think that's enough to keep your body's fitness to play? Do you think you'll improve your body's fitness in the different areas?" Listen to their responses. "You need to be active outside practice to keep your overall fitness at a level that helps you play ball.

What are some activities you could do outside of practice?" Listen to their responses. Discuss activities such as jogging, bicycling, and playing catch.

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

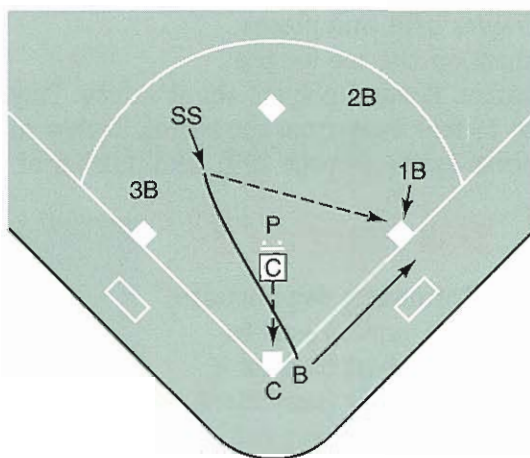
"Zero-Zero"  
(zero outs and zero runners on base)

### Goals

Infielders will field grounders and throw the runner out at first base. The runner tries to make it safely to first.

### Description

Set up an infield (or two). Play a 6 v 6 game (you can use fewer players per team). The batting team hits off a tee or coach, always beginning with the bases empty. Batters must hit grounders to the infield. Players score a point by reaching first base safely. If possible, they continue to advance. The side is retired after three points or three outs, whichever comes first. Each team should keep track of the points scored and compare the score to the score of Game 2.




## PURPOSE

To defend third base in tag situations. The focus is on covering third base on tag plays and on proper baserunning techniques in advancing from second base to third base.

## Equipment

- Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- Four batting tees
- Five balls per tee
- One glove per player
- One ball per player (minimum)



-  Encourage players to communicate on every play in the Game and Skill Practice parts of practice.





**Coach:** What's the difference between a force play and a tag play?

**Players:** Force play is when the runner must run to the next base, and a tag play is when the runner can choose to advance or stay on their current base. In a force play, the fielder tags the base; in a tag play, the fielder tags the runner.

**Coach:** How effectively did your team keep runners off base or keep them from advancing?

**Players:** Sometimes, but not always.

**Coach:** Let's determine who is responsible for covering first and second base in certain situations and how the base should be covered on force and tag play situations.

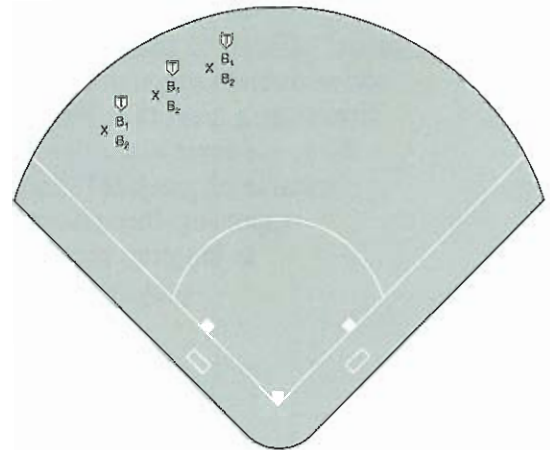
## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

Players practice hitting. Set up batting tees within 5 feet of a fence. Batters hit into the fence. Each player takes 10 hits in a row and then rotates. One player gives feedback and instruction. The next hitter retrieves balls and places them on the tee for the batter. Remind players about safety: Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter. Review rules related to batters, including

strike zone (see page 299), and number of balls and strikes (see page 305).



### COACH'S point

Review who covers first and how to cover first. Review *offensive interference* and *defensive interference* rules (see pages 297 and 296, respectively).

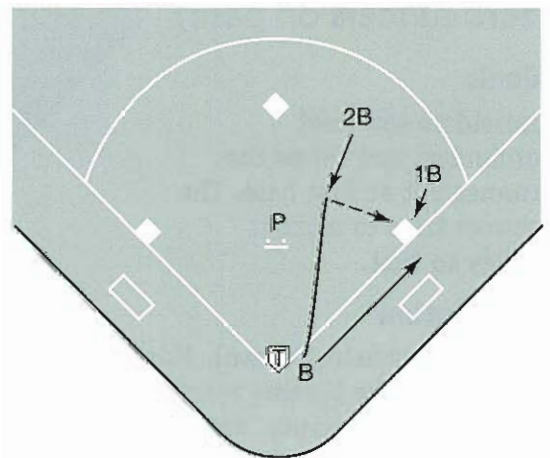
Some situations will call for a player to flip the ball to the player covering the base. Some players may need to practice this skill for control and accuracy.

### Skill Practice 2

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to cover first base on a force play (see "Force Plays" on page 256).
2. Practice covering first base.

#### Description

Play a 3 v 3 game with a pitcher, second and first base players, and three batters. Batters take turns hitting from a tee. They must hit grounders to the right side of the infield. Each batter gets three at-bats and scores



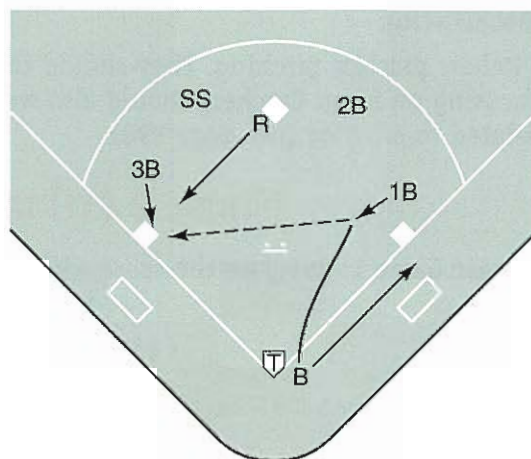
# Week 3

a point every time he or she reaches first safely. Players rotate positions each inning. The game is completed after three innings or 15 minutes, whichever comes first.

## Skill Practice 3

### Description

Practice tag plays at third base. Play a game with players at third, second, and first base and short-stop, and three batters. Batters hit from a tee. They must hit a grounder into the infield and run to first. The runner on second should advance to third and must be tagged out.



### For hitting and running to first

- "Ready position!"
- "Watch the ball on the batting tee!"
- "Step and swing fast!"
- "Contact in the power zone!"
- "Step and drive to first base!"
- "Run hard outside the line!"
- "Watch the coach!"
- "Run all the way through the base!"
- "Round first on the signal!" (Or, "Advance to second on the signal!")

### For rounding first

- "Start your turn on the approach to the base."
- "Push off on the inside corner of the base."
- "Listen for the coach's signal to 'go' or make the 'turn.'"

### For tagging


- "Select your position!" (depending on angle of incoming ball)
- "Ready position!"
- "Straddle the base!"
- "Watch the ball into the glove!"
- "Catch firmly!"
- "Sweep low!"

### COACH'S cues




### COACH'S point



 Encourage players to not watch the ball after they have hit. This delays their initial step to first base.



 Pitchers and catchers can participate in one or two other Skill Practices, then complete Skill Practice 4.



## Skill Practice 4 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

### Description

Pitchers practice pitching. They should throw at *slow* to *moderate* speed, focusing on form. Catchers should also work on technique. Review rules related to *pitching* (see page 298).

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat Game 1. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

## Team Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Respect

Gather team into a group near two cones about 10 feet apart. "What are some of the umpire's duties during a game?" Listen to and discuss responses. "Who makes the calls during the game? Can you disagree if you think an umpire's call is not right, or do you accept the call even if you think it's wrong? If you think you can discuss the call with the umpire, stand at this cone. If you think the umpire makes the call and you accept it, stand at this cone." All players should vote.

"You need to have respect for the umpires at all times. They are in charge on the field during a game. Don't argue with them; accept their calls and decisions. But, if you have a question, ask the umpire or me during a break."

### Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and remind players of the first game.

## Variations

You can break each situation down further; for example, use only a pitcher and first base player, along with a couple of runners. You can hit a ball to the first base player and have the pitcher cover first on the play.

# Week 4

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Run twice around the bases. Play catch with a partner. After 2 or 3 minutes, partners should throw some line drives, fly balls, and grounders back and forth to each other.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

**Key Idea:** Muscular strength and endurance

Gather players into a group in a small area. "I want everyone to find a partner and balance back to back while sitting like a chair. I'll time you for one minute." Model the action for the group. "What muscles did you use to hold yourselves up?" Touch the different areas with your hand to show players the muscle groups of their legs, front and back. "You use different muscles to perform different activities. Practicing using specific muscles improves your muscular strength and endurance—that is, how hard you can throw and how long you can run the bases before your muscles get tired."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

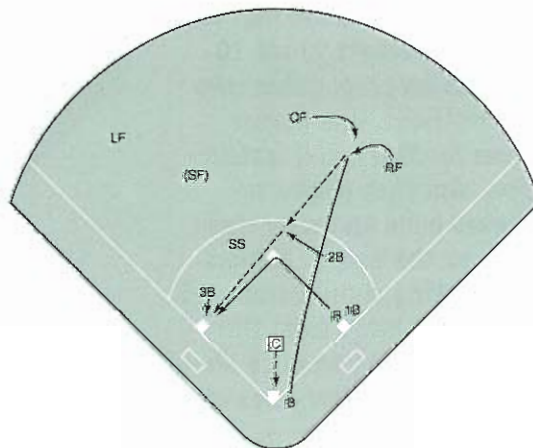
### "Movin' on Up"

#### Goals

The offense tries to advance the runner to third base. The defense tries to keep the runner from advancing to third base.

#### Description

Set up an outfield, a third base player, a shortstop, and a second base player. The batting team always begins with a runner on first base. Play 5 v 5 or 6 v 6, depending on the number of outfielders used. Batters hit off a tee or coach and attempt to hit the ball to the outfield. Infielders should let balls go through to the outfield. If the runner gets to second



## PURPOSE

To defend on balls hit to the outfield with a runner on first base. The focus is on outfielders demonstrating proper techniques in fielding fly balls, line drives, and ground balls and on demonstrating proper positioning in backing up teammates. In the infield the focus is on covering second base on throws from the outfield.

## Equipment

- Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- Four batting tees
- Five balls per tee
- One glove per player
- One ball per player (minimum)

- base safely, the offensive team scores a point and does not continue running. The defense also scores a point if the runner advances only to second base (for holding the runner to one base on a single). If the runner makes it to third base, the offense scores two points. If the runner is thrown out at third base, the defense scores two points. The side is retired after six points for either side.

Coach: What was the goal of the game if you were an outfielder?

Players: Hold the runner at second base or get the runner out at third base.

Coach: Who covered second base if the ball was hit to the right side? To the left side?

Players: Shortstop (right side); second base player (left side).

Coach: If the runner attempted to go to third, who was the cutoff for the throw?

Players: Shortstop (for left fielder and center fielder); second base player (for right fielder).

Coach: If you want to hit a long ball, should you swing the bat hard or fast? What's the difference?

Players: Fast. To swing fast you need to keep your arms loose, instead of tensing them up.

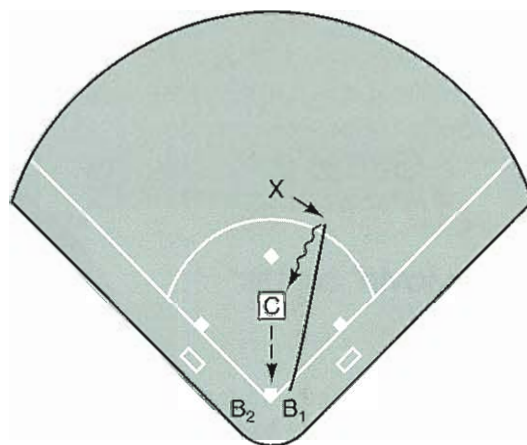


## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

Players practice hitting. Each player attempts to hit 10 balls as far as possible into the outfield. One player gives feedback and instruction. Another player retrieves balls and rolls them back to the coach. Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter. Players on deck should take 10 to 20 practice swings, working on bat speed. Review rules related to the *sacrifice fly* (see page 250).



#### COACH'S point

👉 Devices used to increase bat speed, such as a Wiffle bat that "pops" when you swing hard, might be useful. The harder you swing, the louder it pops.

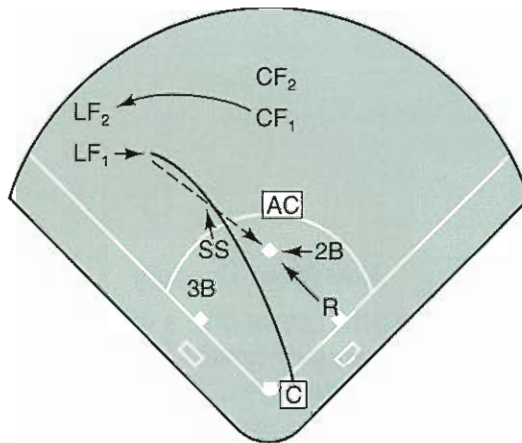
## COACH'S cues



- “Ready position!”
- “Watch the ball out of the pitcher’s hand!”
- “Step and swing fast!”
- “Contact in the power zone!”

## Skill Practice 2

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to catch fly balls (see page 293).
2. Practice catching fly balls in the context of Skill Practice 2.



## Description

Outfielders practice catching fly balls and getting the ball in quickly to the infield. Place two players in left, two players in center or left center, and players at second, shortstop, and third (the outfielders alternate on every new play). Extra players serve as baserunners, taking off from first base on your signal. Throw or hit balls between the outfield positions, alternating among fly balls, line drives, and grounders. One player calls and catches the ball and the other player backs him or her up and says where to throw the ball. After 10 throws or hits, players rotate.

## COACH'S cues



### For fielding in the outfield

- “Feet to the ball!”
- “Watch it in!”
- “Smooth transition from catch to throw.”
- “Keep the feet moving through ball and toward target.”
- “Throw the ball quickly into the base or cutoff.”


### For backing up the play

- “Move quickly into position!”
- “Adjust with the play!”
- “Assume that the fielder will miss the ball!”

## COACH'S point

- 👉 Review the fly ball tag up rule (see page 275).
- 👉 Put an additional coach or parent in the outfield and another at second base.
- 👉 Remember to rotate players to all positions during practices and games.



 Pitchers and catchers can participate in one of the other Skill Practices, then complete Skill Practice 3.



## Skill Practice 3 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

Pitchers should throw *moderate* to *moderately fast*. Focus on form and accuracy. Catchers should continue working on technique and also give the pitcher feedback on control, telling him or her, for example, exactly what part of the plate the ball crossed or if the ball missed a corner.

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat Game 1. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

## Team Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Honesty

Gather team into a group. "Give me some examples of being dishonest in practices and games." Listen to their responses. After each response, have players change the examples into acts of honesty. Take three examples. "Honesty is an important value that all players should be practicing every practice and game, especially if a coach isn't there to help you make the right decision, or if an umpire doesn't see the play."

### Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about the practice and give reminders for the next game.

## Variations

- Repeat Skill Practice 2 on the right side of the field and have the shortstop cover second base.
- Repeat Skill Practice 2 and have fielders intentionally miss the ball so that players performing backup can practice positioning and fielding a missed ball.

# Week 5

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Run twice around the bases. Play catch with a partner. After 2 or 3 minutes, partners should throw some line drives, fly balls, and grounders back and forth to each other.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Flexibility

Gather team into a circle. "Is there such a thing as stretching your muscles too far, or should you stretch as far as you can to improve your flexibility?" Listen to their responses. "Muscles should stretch only until you feel a slight pulling. You should never feel pain stretching. If you do, you're stretching too far." Choose a stretch for the team to try. "I want you to stretch until you feel the slight pulling. Everyone will have different levels of flexibility, but all of you need to stretch properly to stay flexible and prevent injuries."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

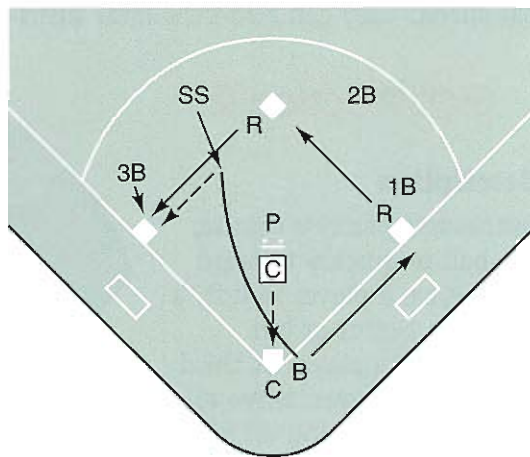
"3 for 3"

### Goals

The offense tries to advance the runner to third base. The defense tries to get the runner out at third base.

### Description

Set up an infield (or two). Play a 6 v 6 game. The batting team has runners at first and second. If a runner gets to third base safely, the offense scores three points, and that runner does not continue running. The fielding team attempts to get the runner out at third base. The side is retired after nine points or three outs, whichever comes first.



### PURPOSE

To defend on ground balls in the infield and the outfield when runners are on first and second base. The focus is on covering third base and proper base-running.

### Equipment

- ✓ Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- ✓ Four batting tees
- ✓ Five balls per tee
- ✓ One glove per player
- ✓ One ball per player (minimum)





Coach: What was the goal of the game if you were an infielder?

Players: Get the runner out at third base.

Coach: Who covers third base? How?

Players: The third base player, by standing just off the base between the ball and base, placing the foot opposite the glove hand on the outside edge of the base.

Coach: How is running from second to third different from running from first to second?

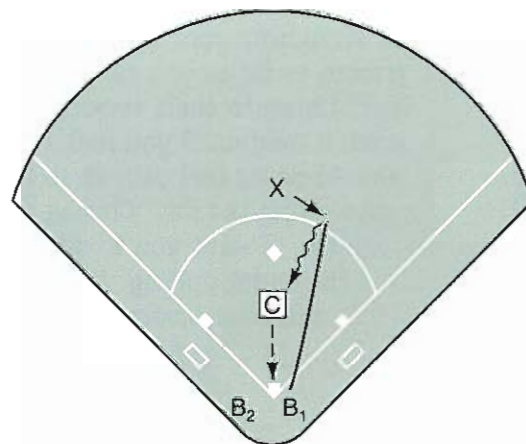
Players: It's not unless you have to round the base to run home, then it's just like rounding first to run to second.

## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

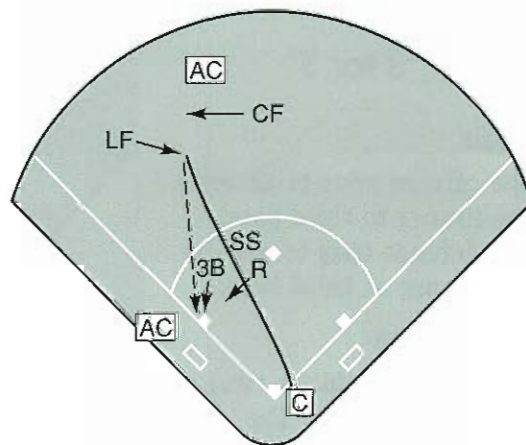
Players practice hitting. Each player attempts to hit 10 balls as far as possible into the outfield. One player gives feedback and instruction. Another player retrieves balls and rolls them back to the coach. Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter. Players on deck should take 10 to 20 practice swings, working on bat speed. They can also take some turns hitting off the tee into a fence.



### Skill Practice 2

#### Description

Outfielders practice getting the ball in quickly to third base. Place a player in left, a player in center or left center, and a player at third base. Extra players serve as baserunners, taking off from second base on your signal. Throw or hit balls between these outfield positions, alternating among fly balls, line drives, and grounders. One player calls and catches the ball and the other player moves into position for the backup and tells the fielder where to throw the ball. After 10 throws or hits, players rotate.



Put an additional coach or parent in the outfield and another at second base.

# Week 5

## COACH'S cues



### For taking throw from the outfield

- “Position between the ball and base!”
- “Foot opposite glove hand on outside edge of base!”
- “Watch the ball into the glove.”

### For baserunning

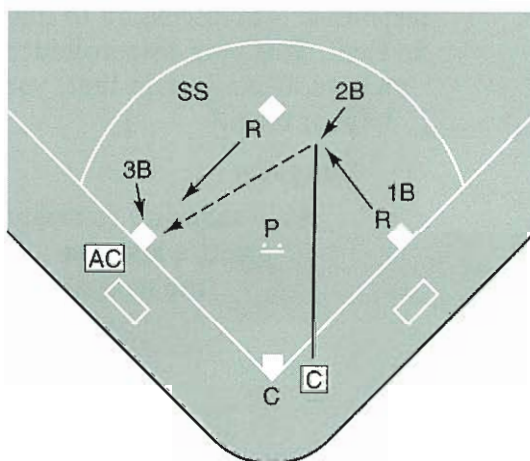
- “Take off on contact!”
- “Run hard!”
- “Lean back, weight on heels!” (to stop)

## Skill Practice 3

### Description

Infielders practice the force play at third base. Place players at all infield positions. Extra players serve as baserunners, taking off from first and second base on your signal. Hit grounders to each infield position. Infielders field the ball and make the play at third base.

Players rotate after three trials at each position. Position a coach at third base to give cues on the proper technique required to cover third on a force-out situation.



## Skill Practice 4 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

Pitchers should throw *moderate* to *moderately fast*. Focus on form and accuracy. Catchers should continue working on technique and should also give the pitcher feedback on control, telling him or her, for example, exactly what part of the plate the ball crossed or if the ball missed the outside corner.

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat Game 1 to apply what has just been learned. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

COACH'S  
point



Put an additional coach or parent in the outfield and another at third base.

COACH'S  
point



Pitchers and catchers can participate in one or two other Skill Practices, then complete Skill Practice 4.



## Team Circle (5 minutes)

### **Key Idea:** Responsibility

Gather team into a group. Choose two players to demonstrate with you. Have one player run from home to first as fast as he or she can. Have the second player run from home to first lazily, without trying hard. "What was I working on during this drill?" Listen to responses; lead discussion to hustling to beat a throw to first. "It is your responsibility to work hard to get on base. When you do that, you're being responsible to your team."

### **Wrap-Up**

Make summary comments about practice and give reminders for the next game.

## Variations

- You can run Skill Practices 1 and 2 concurrently with players switching tasks after 15 to 20 minutes.
- Have the outfielders on one field and infielders on another field, both working on the same situation.
- Repeat Skill Practice 2 on the right side of the field.
- Allow the runner to continue running to home if the situation arises. This will create a tag play at home or, if the runner is coming back to the base, a tag play at third.

# Week 6

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Run twice around the bases. Play catch with a partner. After 2 or 3 minutes, partners should throw some line drives, fly balls, and grounders back and forth to each other.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Safety

Gather team into a group. Gently tap your head with your fist. "Is my head hard or soft? Right—it's hard because my skull is hard. It's made out of bone. Raise your hand if you think bones can break. Right—we all know that bones can break. If you tap your helmets, they are hard, just like bones. They give extra protection and keep you safe playing ball."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

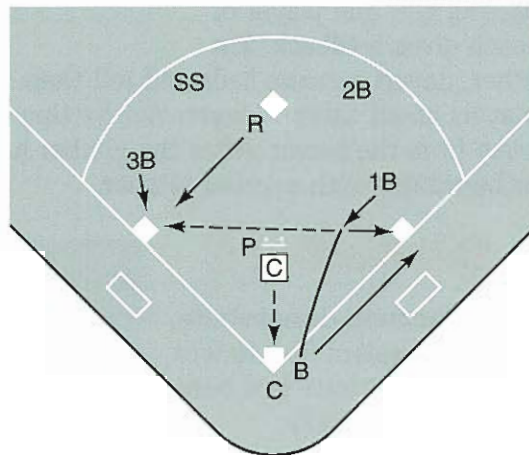
### "Stayin' Alive"

#### Goals

The offense tries to advance the runner to third base. The defense tries to hold the runner at second base and get the runner out at first.

#### Description

Set up an infield (or two). Play 6 v 6. The batting team always starts with a runner on second. If the runner gets to third base safely, the offensive team scores three points, and that runner does not continue running. Batters must hit ground balls. The side is retired after nine points or three outs, whichever comes first. Review rules related to running bases and overthrows (see pages 272 and 298, respectively).



## PURPOSE

To defend bases when runners are on second or third base and a grounder is hit to the infield. The focus is on looking the runner back to the base before throwing to first base.

## Equipment

- ✓ Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- ✓ Four batting tees
- ✓ Five balls per tee
- ✓ One glove per player
- ✓ One ball per player (minimum)



**👉** Have a coach's corner, where players can go for extra help. Parents can be responsible for providing help. You can "recommend" it to the player or the player can go on his or her own. Players go to the coach's corner for 5 to 15 minutes to practice a particular skill. *Caution:* Make this a place for every player, not just low-skilled players.

**Coach:** What did you have to do to hold the runner at second and get an out at first?

**Players:** Field, look the runner back, then throw to first.

**Coach:** If the fielder cannot get the runner at first, what should he or she do?

**Players:** Hold the runner at second base.

**Coach:** What did runners have to do to delay the throw?

**Players:** Fake like you were running to third, but be ready to get back to second if the throw goes to second and to third if the throw goes to first.

**Coach:** What did you do to get to third?

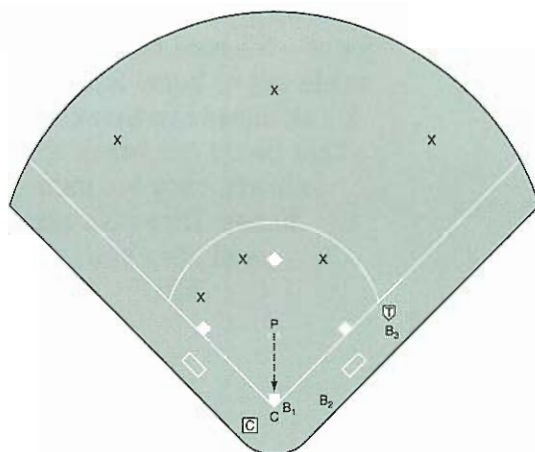
**Players:** Took off on the throw.

## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

Players practice hitting. One of your pitchers throws for five batters, 10 pitches each. Players on deck should take practice swings, pretending they are the hitter. The batter third in line should work on a batting tee. One player or coach gives feedback. The other players retrieve balls and roll them back to the pitcher. Remind players about safety: Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter. After the pitcher has thrown to five batters, she or he rotates with another pitcher.

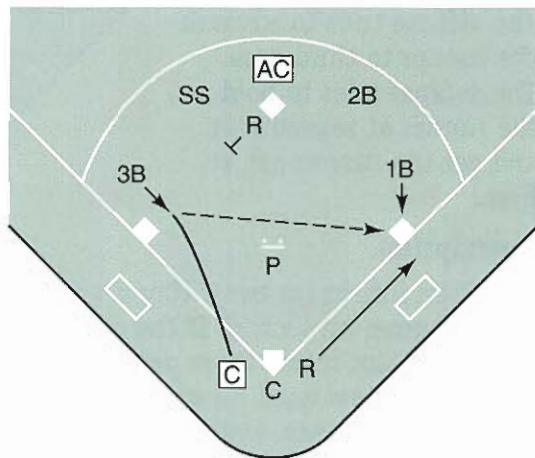


### Skill Practice 2

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *look a runner back* to a base (see page 267).
2. Practice looking runners back to a base.

#### Description

Place players at all infield positions. Extra players serve as baserunners, taking off from behind home plate and second base on your signal.



# Week 6

Hit grounders to each infield position. Infielders field the ball, look the runner back, and make the appropriate play. Players rotate after three trials at each position. Position a coach at second base to help with proper leadoff technique as well as proper positioning of the shortstop and second base player.



## For holding runner

"Ready position!"  
"Show a target!"

## For looking runner back

"Field the ball."  
"Look back during the throwing motion."  
"Throw to first."

## If the runner goes

"Fake throw!"  
"Pivot and throw to third base!"

## For leading off

"Fake!"  
"Maintain medium to low posture."  
"Go on the throw!"

## Skill Practice 3

### Description

Fielders practice holding a runner on third base. Repeat Skill Practice 2, except with a runner on third.


## Skill Practice 4 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

Pitchers should throw *moderate* to *moderately fast*. Focus on form and accuracy. Catchers should continue working on technique and should also give the pitcher feedback on control, telling him or her, for example, exactly what part of the plate the ball crossed or if the ball missed a corner.

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat Game 1 to apply what has just been learned. Compare the score with the score of the first game.



 Pitchers and catchers can participate in one or two other Skill Practices, then complete Skill Practice 4.

## Team Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Caring

Gather team into a group near two cones 10 feet apart. Discuss examples of good play during a game. Have players assist in providing examples. "We talked about some examples of good plays. Raise your hand if you think it's a good idea to tell other players they made a good play. It is a good idea. Do you think it's a good idea to tell opponents they have made a good play? If you think it is, stand at this cone. If you think you should tell just your teammates they made a good play, stand at this cone." All players should vote. Ask why players voted the way they did. "Telling other players, both teammates and opponents, that they have made a good play shows you care. It is an important value to show others."

### Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and give reminders for the next game.



## Variations

- Set up two fields for Skill Practice 2. This will provide plenty of opportunities for players to practice this situation.
- Work on the first base player's responsibilities if the runner takes off from second. Typically, the first base player backs up second base in a rundown of a runner between second and third.
- Allow runners to continue running to home if they can. This will create a tag play at home or, if the runner is coming back to third base, a tag play at third.
- Have players who are ready practice hitting to specific areas of the field. Have them hit from a tee first, then from a live pitch.

# Week 7

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Run three times around the bases. Play catch with a partner. After 2 or 3 minutes, partners should throw some line drives, fly balls, and grounders back and forth to each other.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Training and conditioning

Gather team into a single-file line. Players will run two distances, one longer than the other. Have the team run the shorter distance first and come back to the starting spot. Then have the team run the longer distance. "Do your muscles feel tired? Running farther, especially if you're a little bit tired, is called *overloading* the muscles. Running a longer distance adds more for the muscles to do. It's training the muscles to make them stronger and able to move longer before getting tired the next time you play. You'll get stronger and have more endurance every time you overload the muscles."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

### "Tag"

#### Goals

The offense tries to advance the runner to third base. The defense tries to hold the runner at second base.

#### Description

Play an intrasquad game by dividing players into three teams of five. One team bats while the other two teams are in the field. Rotate teams at bat and in field. The side is retired after nine points or three outs, whichever comes first.

The batting team always begins with a runner on second (see page 114 for a diagram). If the runner gets to third base safely, the offense scores three points, and that runner does not continue running. The batter should throw a fly ball into the outfield. A ball caught on the fly counts as an out, as does a runner being thrown out at third base.

## PURPOSE

To defend against runners advancing to third base on line drives or fly balls hit to the outfield when runners are on second base. The focus is on proper technique in fielding fly balls and quickly returning them to the infield.

## Equipment

- Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- Four batting tees
- Five balls per tee
- One glove per player
- One ball per player (minimum)





Coach: What did you have to do to hold the runner at second?

Players: Catch the ball and throw it immediately to the cutoff player.

Coach: As a runner, what should you do on a fly ball?

Players: Tag up.

Coach: When can you leave the base?

Players: As soon as the fielder touches the ball.

Coach: Where should you be looking after the ball is hit?

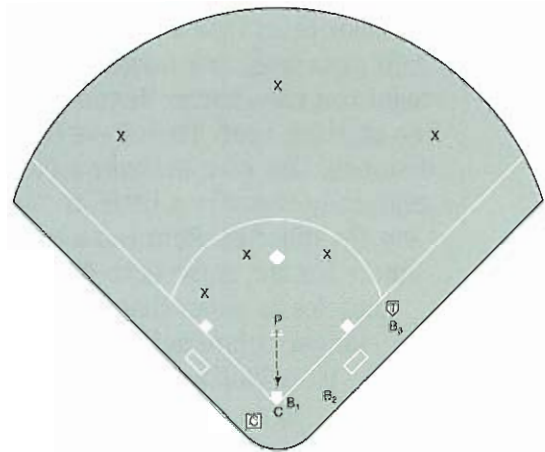
Players: At the third base coach.

## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

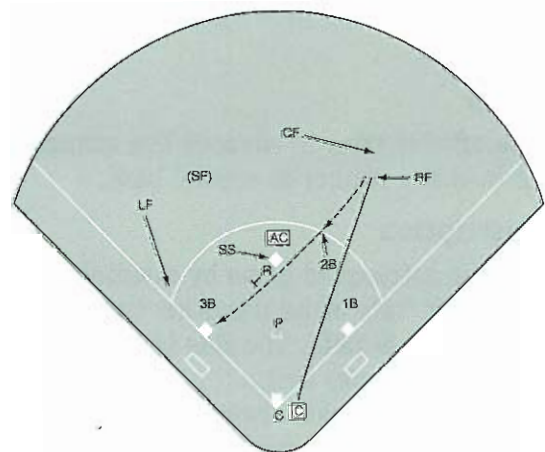
Players practice hitting. One of your pitchers throws for five batters, 10 pitches each. Players on deck should take practice swings, pretending they are the hitter. The batter third in line should work on a batting tee. One player or coach gives feedback. The other players retrieve balls and roll them back to the pitcher. Remind players about safety: Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter. After the pitcher has thrown to five batters, she or he rotates with another pitcher.



### Skill Practice 2

#### Description

Outfielders practice holding a runner on second on a fly ball. Field a full team. Throw or hit line drives and fly balls to the outfield. Extra players serve as baserunners, taking off from second base as soon as an outfielder touches the ball. Fielders on the left side should throw to third, and those on the right side should throw to the second base player who then relays the ball to third. Players rotate after three trials in any outfield position. Position a coach at second



# Week 7

base to help with proper baserunning technique as well as proper positioning of the shortstop and second base player as he or she anticipates a possible tag play or cutoff.

## COACH'S cues



### For outfielders

- “Feet to the ball!”
- “Watch it in!”
- “Smooth transition from catch to throw.”
- “Keep feet moving through the ball and toward the target.”
- “Throw the ball quickly into the base or cutoff.”

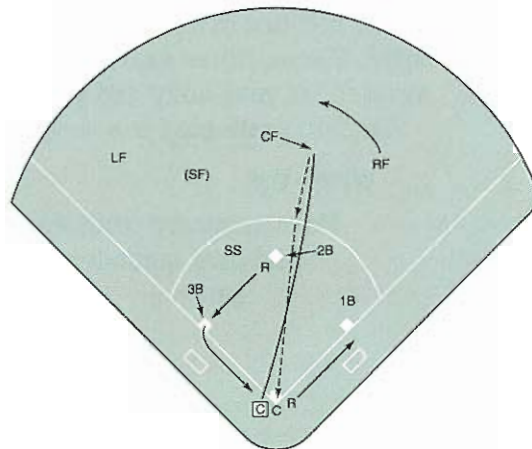
### For baserunners tagging up

- “Watch the coach.”
- “Go on the signal!”

## Skill Practice 3

### Description

Players practice making cutoff and relay throws. Repeat Skill Practice 2, except have an additional runner take off from home plate on your thrown or batted ball and have the runner on second attempt to score. This will set up relay or cutoff situations. Players should communicate when the ball should be cut and what base to throw to.



## Skill Practice 4 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

Pitchers should throw *moderate* to *moderately fast*. Focus on form and accuracy. Catchers should continue working on technique and should also give the pitcher feedback on control, telling him or her, for example, exactly what part of the plate the ball crossed or if the ball missed a corner.

## COACH'S point



- Some players will be ready to learn how to time an approach to a fly ball so they can use their momentum to get the ball in faster. Encourage all outfielders to catch and throw quickly into the infield.
- Review *tag play* and *tag up* rules (see pages 259 and 275, respectively).

## COACH'S point



- Review the *overthrow* rule (see page 298).

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat Game 1 to apply what has just been learned. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

### Team Circle (5 minutes)

#### Key Idea: Respect

Gather team into a group. "What are some examples of dangerous play for yourself or teammates during a practice or game?" Listen to their responses and identify whether they are dangerous. Discuss their responses. Ask players to agree or disagree with responses—are they a good practice or not? They can raise their hand to agree. Discuss three examples. "It's important to have respect for your body and your teammates' bodies. Practicing safe play is a way to do that."

#### Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and give reminders for the next game.



### Variations

Put players in lines of threes, about 40 feet apart. The first person in line starts with the ball. On the signal, player 1 throws to player 2, 2 to 3, then 3 back to 2, and 2 to 1. This is one rotation. Each team of three counts how many rotations they can complete in one minute. This will help them work on catching the ball in proper position and rotating the proper direction on a relay. Emphasis is on quick catch, quick pivot, and quick (but accurate) release.

# Week 8

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Run three times around the bases. Play catch with a partner. After 2 or 3 minutes, partners should throw some line drives, fly balls, and grounders back and forth to each other.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Flexibility

Gather team into a circle and choose a stretch for them to try. "When we're stretching, should we feel anything?" Listen to their responses. "When I feel the slight pulling, what should I do? Bounce or hold the stretch? Raise your hand if you think bounce. Now raise your hand if you think hold. To get a good stretch, you should hold the stretch for 10 counts, then relax. If you feel the slight pulling go away, you can stretch a bit further.

That tells you your muscles are getting more flexible. Be sure to practice proper stretching to improve your flexibility."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

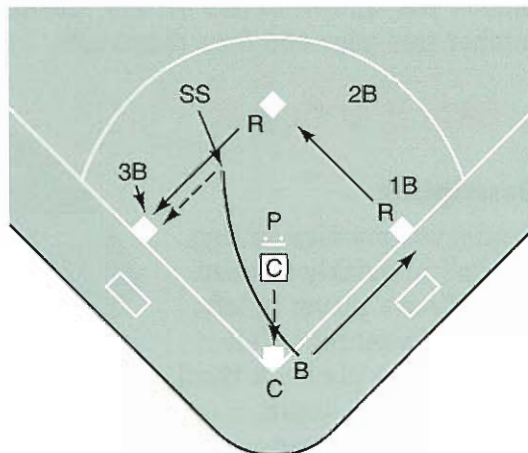
"3 for 3"

### Goals

The offense tries to advance the runner to third base.  
The defense tries to get the runner out at third base.

### Description

Set up an infield (or two).  
Play a 6 v 6 game. The batting team has runners at first and second. If a runner gets to third base safely, the offense scores 1 point, and if that runner crosses home plate safely, the offense scores 3 more points. Batters must hit ground balls. The fielding team attempts to get the runner out at third base. The side is retired after 12 points or three outs, whichever comes first.



## PURPOSE

To defend at third base on balls hit to the infield or outfield. The focus is on covering third base on force plays, covering home plate on tag plays, and demonstrating proper baserunning.

## Equipment

- ✓ Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- ✓ Four batting tees
- ✓ Five balls per tee
- ✓ One glove per player
- ✓ One ball per player (minimum)



- Coach: What was the goal of the game if you were an infielder?
- **Players:** Get the runner out at third base.

Coach: Who covers third base? How?

**Players:** The third base player, by standing just off the base between the ball and base, placing the foot opposite the glove hand on the outside edge of the base.

Coach: How is running from second to third different from running from first to second?

**Players:** It's not unless you have to round the base to run home, then it's just like rounding first to run to second.

Coach: What kind of adjustments did the defensive team have to make if the runner went home?

**Players:** Ball had to be thrown to home, which set up a tag play; sometimes had to use a cutoff or relay; had to pay attention to other runners so they would not advance.

## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

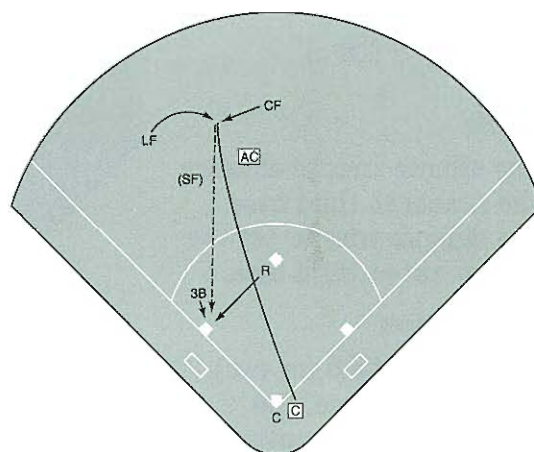
Players practice hitting. One of your pitchers throws for five batters, 10 pitches each. Players on deck should take practice swings, pretending they are the hitter. The batter third in line should work on a batting tee. One player or coach gives feedback. The other players retrieve balls and roll them back to the pitcher. Remind players about safety: Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter. After the pitcher has thrown to five batters, she or he rotates with another pitcher (see page 166 for a diagram).

### Skill Practice 2

#### Description

Outfielders practice getting the ball in quickly to third base. Place a player in left, a player in center or left center, and a player at third base and home. Extra players serve as base-runners, taking off from second base on your signal.

Throw or hit balls between these outfield positions, alternating among fly balls, line drives, and grounders. One player calls and catches the ball and the other player moves into position for the backup and tells the fielder where to throw



Put an additional coach or parent in the outfield and another at third base and home plate.

# Week 8

the ball. After 10 throws or hits, players rotate. Repeat with a runner advancing to home plate.

## COACH'S cues



### For taking throw from the outfield

- “Position between the ball and base!”
- “Foot opposite glove hand on outside edge of base!”
- “Watch the ball into the glove.”

### For making sweep tag

- “Select your position!” (depending on angle of incoming ball)
- “Ready position!”
- “Straddle the base!”
- “Watch the ball into the glove!”
- “Catch firmly!”
- “Sweep low!”

### For baserunning

- “Take off on contact!”
- “Run hard!”
- “Lean back, weight on heels!” (to stop)

## Skill Practice 3

### Description


Infielders practice the force play at third base. Place players at all infield positions (see page 159 for a diagram). Extra players serve as baserunners, taking off from first and second base on your signal. Hit grounders to each infield position. Infielders field the ball and make the play at third base. Players rotate after three trials at each position. Position a coach at third base to give cues on the proper technique required to cover third on a force-out situation. Runners should advance to home whenever possible, setting up a tag situation at home plate.

## Skill Practice 4 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

Pitchers should throw *moderate* to *full* speed. Focus on form and accuracy. Catchers should continue working on technique and should also give the pitcher feedback on control, telling him or her, for example, exactly what part of the plate the ball crossed or if the ball missed a corner.

## COACH'S point



 Pitchers and catchers can participate in two other Skill Practices, then complete Skill Practice 4.

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat Game 1 to apply what has just been learned. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

### Team Circle (5 minutes)

#### Key Idea: Caring

Gather team into a group. "What are some examples of showing you care about your teammates?" Listen to their responses. After each response, ask for an example of the same sign of caring that players could do outside of practice. Discuss the on-field and off-field examples at the same time, then ask for another response. "Those were all great ideas to show caring to your teammates. Have you seen someone else show an 'act of kindness' toward another teammate?" Discuss their responses. "It's important to show caring both on and off the field."

#### Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and give reminders for the next game.



### Variations

- Skill Practices 1 and 2 can be run concurrently with players switching tasks after 15 to 20 minutes.
- Repeat Skill Practice 2 on the right side of the field.

# Week 9

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Run three times around the bases. Play catch with a partner. After 2 or 3 minutes, partners should throw some line drives, fly balls, and grounders back and forth to each other.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Training and conditioning

Gather team into a group. "Do you think you should swim to get ready for our season? Raise your hand if you think jogging is a good way to prepare for baseball or softball. Jogging is a good way to keep active in the off-season or other times when you don't have practice. To improve your conditioning either before or during baseball season, it's best to participate in skills you use in baseball or softball. That is called *specificity training* because it is specific to the sport. What are some of the training skills we should be using for baseball or softball?" Listen to their responses. "Running, throwing, and hitting are the best."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

### "Intrasquad"

#### Goals

The offense tries to score. The defense tries to prevent runs.

#### Description

Play an intrasquad game (for description of setup, see Game 1 in Week 7, page 165). The offense is always in a force play situation. In other words, if a runner reaches second, a runner must be on first (or be placed on first); if a runner is on third, runners must also be on first and second. The batter gets only two strikes, including foul balls. The side is retired after three runs or three outs, whichever comes first. Review rules related to force-outs (see page 117 for a diagram).

## PURPOSE

To defend bases on force plays in various situations. The focus is on tactical understanding on all force play situations, executing force plays correctly, and demonstrating proper baserunning technique and proper backups.

## Equipment

- Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- Four batting tees
- Five balls per tee
- One glove per player
- One ball per player (minimum)



## COACH'S cues



### For force play

- “Position between the ball and base.”
- “Place foot opposite glove hand on outside edge of base.”
- “Watch the ball into the glove.”



Coach: Did your team always know the right play to make?

Players: (various answers)

Coach: Was your team always able to execute the right play? Where did you have problems?

Players: (With a coach/parent, let each team determine where they had the most problems or where they could use more work to execute more efficiently.)

## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description


Players practice hitting. One of your pitchers throws for five batters, 10 pitches each. Players on deck should take practice swings, pretending they are the hitter. The batter third in line should work on a batting tee. One player or coach gives feedback. The other players retrieve balls and roll them back to the pitcher. Remind players about safety: Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter. After the pitcher has thrown to five batters, she or he rotates with another pitcher (see page 166 for a diagram).

### Skill Practice 2

#### Description

Select a drill from a previous practice that addresses a need of the team. Or design a drill that will isolate a situation in which the team or individual players need practice.



 If there is not an appropriate drill, create one of your own—or have the players create a drill. Guide them so they do not have too many players waiting in line and so that everyone is actively participating in the drill.

# Week 9

## Skill Practice 3 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

Pitchers should throw *moderate* to *full* speed. Focus on form and accuracy. Catchers should continue working on technique and should also give the pitcher feedback on control, telling him or her, for example, exactly what part of the plate the ball crossed or if the ball missed a corner.

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat Game 1 to apply what has just been learned. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

## Team Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Responsibility

Gather team into a circle. "I want everyone to think of one thing that you, personally, can improve in your play that can make you a better player. I will go around the circle; when it's your turn, tell everyone what you think you can work on." Go to each player one at a time; assist them, if necessary. Allow them to pass their turn. "It's important to look at your own game to see where you can improve. Improving your own game is your responsibility. We can't get better as a team unless each individual tries to improve."


### Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and give reminders for the next game.

## Variations

- Scrimmage another team for 2 innings, practice for 30 to 40 minutes, then return to the scrimmage game for another 2 or 3 innings. Have a run limit so the games move quickly.
- Split your team in half and play two small-sided games with another team.



 Pitchers and catchers can participate in one other Skill Practice, then complete Skill Practice 3.



# Week 10

## PURPOSE

To defend bases in various tag play situations. The focus is on tactical understanding on tag play situations, covering a base properly, and demonstrating proper base-running techniques and backups.

## Equipment

- Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- Four batting tees
- Five balls per tee
- One glove per player
- One ball per player (minimum)

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Run three times around the bases. Play catch with a partner. After 2 or 3 minutes, partners should throw some line drives, fly balls, and grounders back and forth to each other.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Healthy habits

Gather team into a group near two cones about 10 feet apart. Show a pyramid shape with your hands and fingers put together. "This is a pyramid. Does anyone know what the food pyramid is? We use the food pyramid to remind us how to eat well. The bottom of the pyramid has foods like carbohydrates (breads, cereals, rice) and fruits and vegetables; these should be eaten in greater amounts. The top of the pyramid has high-fat and sweeter foods such as fried foods, cake, and chips; these we should eat in smaller amounts. Tell me a snack and run to this cone if it is a bottom-of-the-pyramid snack or to the other cone if it is a top-of-the-pyramid snack. It's important to eat foods that give you energy for playing. Bottom-of-the-pyramid foods give you more energy to play and are much healthier."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

### "Intrasquad"

#### Goals

The offense tries to score.  
The defense tries to prevent runs.

#### Description

Play an intrasquad game (for description of setup, see page 165). The offense always starts with a runner on second base. If that runner advances to third, no runner should be placed at second.



# Week 10

The batter gets only two strikes, including foul balls. The side is retired after three runs or three outs, whichever comes first.

**Coach:** Did your team always know the right play to make?

**Players:** (various answers)

Was your team always able to execute the right play? Where did you have problems?

**Players:** (With a coach/parent, let each team determine where they had the most problems or where they could use more work to execute more efficiently.)

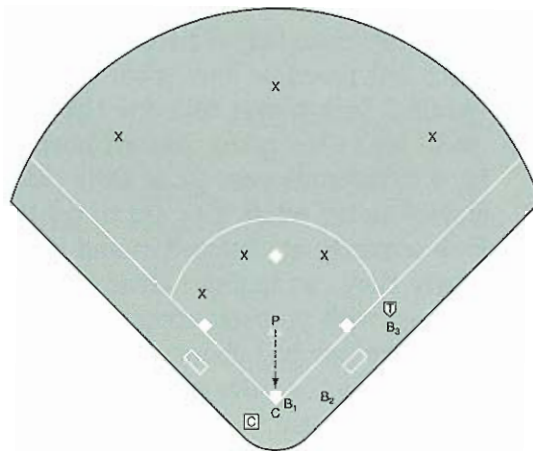


## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

Players practice hitting. One of your pitchers throws for five batters, 10 pitches each. Players on deck should take practice swings, pretending they are the hitter. The batter third in line should work on a batting tee. One player or coach gives feedback. The other players retrieve balls and roll them back to the pitcher. Remind players about safety: Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter. After the pitcher has thrown to five batters, she or he rotates with another pitcher.



### Skill Practice 2

#### Description

Select a drill from a previous practice that addresses a need of the team. Or design a drill that will isolate a situation in which the team or individual players need practice.

### Skill Practice 3 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

Pitchers should throw *moderate* to *full* speed. Focus on form and accuracy. Catchers should continue working on technique and should also give the pitcher feedback on control, telling him or her, for example, exactly what part of the plate the ball crossed or if the ball missed a corner.



☞ If there is not an appropriate drill, create one of your own—or have the players create a drill. Guide them so they do not have too many players in a line and so that everyone is actively participating in the drill.



☞ Pitchers and catchers can participate in one other Skill Practice, then complete Skill Practice 3.

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat Game 1 to apply what has just been learned. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

### Team Circle (5 minutes)

#### Key Idea: Honesty

Gather team into a circle. "I want you to think back to our last practice. Remember talking about improving our games? Each player said one thing he or she could improve on in his or her game. Tell me how many of you feel you have tried to improve your game from the last practice?" Call on players to tell what they did to try to improve. "All good players look honestly at themselves and how they are playing to see where they can improve their game. It is important to be honest with yourself about how you are playing, you don't need to feel bad about needing to improve your skills. The more you improve individually, the more you contribute to the team."

#### Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and give reminders for the next game.



### Variations

- Scrimmage another team for 2 innings, practice for 30 to 40 minutes, then return to the scrimmage game for another 2 or 3 innings. Have a run limit so the games move quickly.
- Split your team in half and play two small-sided games with another team.

# Week 11

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Run three times around the bases. Play catch with a partner. After 2 or 3 minutes, work on speed of catch and throw (i.e., catch the ball in position to throw quickly, then do so).

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Healthy habits

Gather team into a group near two cones about 10 feet apart. Tell them that one cone represents good health habits and the other poor health habits. "Give me examples of some daily habits. If you think it's a healthy habit, stand at this cone. If you think it's a poor health habit, stand at this cone." Ask all players to participate. "It's important to have all our habits be healthy habits every day. This helps your body stay healthy and helps you perform better."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

### "Intrasquad"

#### Goals

Perform the proper backups in various defensive situations.

#### Description

Play an intrasquad, regulation game, except impose a maximum run rule (for description of setup, see page 165). Review the *10-run rule* (see tables 14.1 and 14.2 on pages 300 and 301, respectively). Focus on players getting in proper backup position.

**Coach:** Why are proper backups so important?

**Players:** If there is an error or overthrow, backups keep the runner(s) from advancing.

**Coach:** In which situations did your team have difficulty with executing proper backups?

**Players:** (With a coach/parent, let each team determine where they had the most problems or where they could use more work to execute more efficiently.)

## PURPOSE

To defend in the infield and outfield, demonstrating proper backups in various situations.

## Equipment

- Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- Four batting tees
- Five balls per tee
- One glove per player
- One ball per player (minimum)

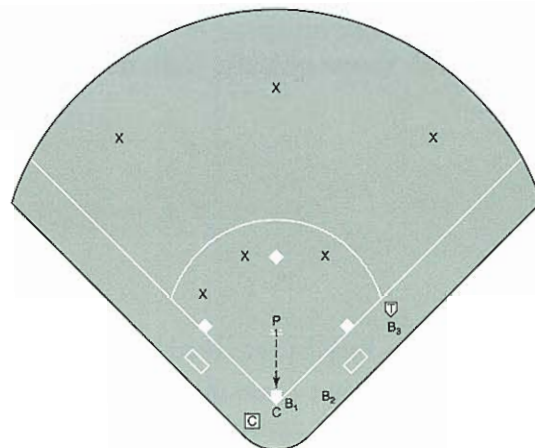


## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

Players practice hitting. One of your pitchers throws for five batters, 10 pitches each. Players on deck should take practice swings, pretending they are the hitter. The batter third in line should work on a batting tee. One player or coach gives feedback. The other players retrieve balls and roll them back to the pitcher. Remind players about safety: Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter. After the pitcher has thrown to five batters, she or he rotates with another pitcher.



#### COACH'S point

Work on communication. Players should talk constantly to each other about where to make a play, how many outs there are, or if there is enough room to make a catch.

Repeat plays that demonstrate proper backup positions, reinforcing the correct techniques.

### Skill Practice 2

#### Description

Set up situations where the backup is weak and practice. Instead of waiting for batters to hit into a situation that calls for a backup, yell out the situation, then throw or hit a ball to an infielder or the outfield. Players move into the appropriate coverage. Rotate players frequently and repeat so that all players know where to move to back up.

#### COACH'S cues



"Move quickly into position!"  
"Adjust with the play!"

#### COACH'S point

Pitchers and catchers can participate in one other Skill Practice, then complete Skill Practice 3.

### Skill Practice 3

(pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

Pitchers should throw *moderate* speed, then increase to *full* speed. Focus on form and accuracy. Catchers should continue working on technique and should also give the pitcher feedback on control, telling him or her, for example, exactly what part of the plate the ball crossed or if the ball missed a corner.

# Week 11

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Play an intrasquad game or scrimmage with another team.

### Team Circle (5 minutes)

**Key Idea:** Responsibility

Gather team into a circle. Create two imaginary situations for the players. One is a game that they win and score two runs. In the second situation the team loses but scores one run. Choose different players to step into the circle for each situation. "In this game, we won. Even though Kyle and Andrew scored runs, did all of you contribute?" Have the players who are demonstrating step back to the circle. "Yes, we all contributed and won as a team." Set up the next scenario. "In this game, we lost. Bill, the pitcher, allowed a run. Is he responsible for the team's loss?" Have the player step back to the circle. "No, the pitcher is not responsible for a loss. We all are responsible for wins and losses. We win and lose as a team and try our best in any position."

**Wrap-Up**

Make summary comments about practice and give reminders for the next game.



### Variations

- Scrimmage another team for 2 innings, practice for 30 to 40 minutes, then return to the scrimmage game for another 2 or 3 innings. Have a run limit so the games move quickly.
- Split your team in half and play two small-sided games with another team.



## PURPOSE

To defend in the infield and outfield in various situations and get on base and advance to the next base. The focus is on demonstrating efficient skill execution and tactical understanding in 90 percent of all situations.

## Equipment

- Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- Four batting tees
- Five balls per tee
- One glove per player
- One ball per player (minimum)



## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Run three times around the bases. Play catch with a partner. After 2 or 3 minutes, work on catching and releasing quickly.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Training and conditioning

Gather team into a group. "Everyone jog to second base and back. Do you remember your first days of practice and how you felt after running that distance?" Discuss their responses. "Think about running an even farther distance during the beginning of the season. Compare how you feel now that it's the end of the season. Your bodies are conditioned from playing all season. Remember to stay active during the off-season. Play other sports or participate in other physical activities. If you don't participate in physical activity after the season, all the training you did for your body will be lost. Your body will reverse its conditioning. This is called the *reversibility principle*—you use it or lose it!"

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

### "Intrasquad"

#### Goals

Make the right play!

#### Description

Play an intrasquad regulation game, except impose a 10-run rule (for description of setup, see page 165).

**Coach:** Were there any breakdowns in your team's defensive play? Offensive play?

**Players:** (With a coach/parent, let each team determine where they had the most problems or where they could use more work to execute more efficiently.)

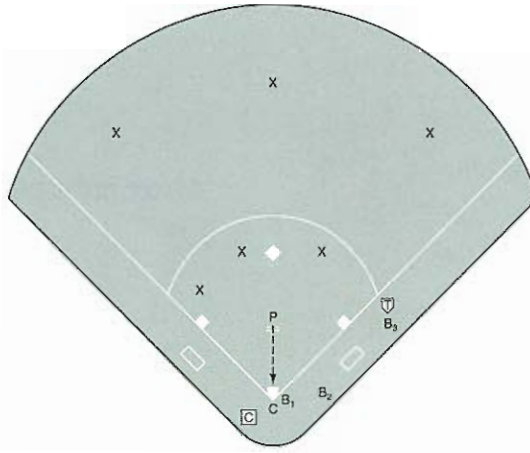
# Week 12

## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

Players practice hitting. One of your pitchers throws for five batters, 10 pitches each. Players on deck should take practice swings, pretending they are the hitter. The batter third in line should work on a batting tee. One player or coach gives feedback. The other players retrieve balls and roll them back to the pitcher. Remind players about safety: Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter. After the pitcher has thrown to five batters, she or he rotates with another pitcher.



### Skill Practice 2

#### Description

Select a drill from a previous practice that addresses a need of the team.

### Skill Practice 3 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

Pitchers should throw *moderate* speed, then increase to *full* speed. Focus on form and accuracy. Catchers should continue working on technique and should also give the pitcher feedback on control, telling him or her, for example, exactly what part of the plate the ball crossed or if the ball missed a corner.



If there is not an appropriate drill, create one of your own—or have the players create a drill. Guide them so they do not have too many players waiting in line and so that everyone is actively participating in the drill.



Pitchers and catchers can participate in one other Skill Practice, then complete Skill Practice 3.

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Play an intrasquad game or scrimmage with another team.

### COACH'S cue



"Where is the play? How do you make that play?"

## Team Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Caring

Gather team in groups of 4 or 5 players. Give each group a scenario in which one player makes a mistake. Direct them to problem solve and decide as a group what would be a good response. Give them two minutes to discuss. Bring each group back as a team and discuss each group's decision. Have players agree or disagree with each group's response by raising their hands. "All of you have done a good job in problem solving. It is important to show you care about your teammates. You can do this by forgiving their mistakes."

### Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and give reminders about the final game.



## Variations

Have each team elect a captain or two to design drills and run practice.