

Season Plan for 12 and Up

The focus now is on playing the full game, building upon the tactics and skills players learned in the previous years. The outline on pages 75-76 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.

Note: The plan is for use with the 12 and Up age group referenced in the YMCA's "Coaching Baseball and Softball" online course.

YMCA Winners Baseball and Softball Season Plan

12- to 13-Year-Olds

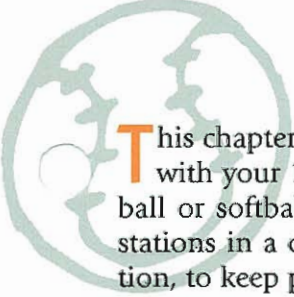
Week	Purpose	Tactics and skills	Rules and traditions	Fitness concepts	Character development concepts
1A	To evaluate player performance and tactical understanding.	Pitching; hitting; catching; throwing; baserunning.	Infield and outfield positions.	General fitness We'll work to improve our cardio-respiratory fitness, flexibility, and muscular strength and endurance.	Four core values We'll stress caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.
1B	To defend in the infield on ground balls.	Fielding grounders; throwing to first base; running to first base; hitting.	Baserunning; interference.	General fitness Work on improving your overall fitness by doing a variety of exercises.	Respect Play with respect no matter how your opponents are playing.
2A	To defend in the infield on ground balls.	Fielding grounders; throwing to first base; pitcher covering first base; running to first base; hitting.	Review baserunning and interference rules.	Overload principle FIT stands for Frequency, Intensity, and Time.	Respect Show respect for your opponents after the game no matter what happened during the game.
2B	To defend in the infield on force plays at second base.	Making force plays; hitting; advancing from first to second base.	Baserunning, bunting, sacrifice bunt, squeeze play.	Overload principle Do other physical activities away from practice to improve and maintain your fitness level.	Responsibility Remember to bring and use proper equipment.
3	To defend in the infield on tag plays at third base.	Covering third base on tag plays; covering first base; baserunning.	Batting interference.	Overload principle Overload the work your body does by increasing intensity.	Honesty Be honest even when others don't see what happens.
4	To defend in the infield by making double plays, second base to first.	Making double plays; advancing from first to second base.		Flexibility It's important to stretch and get limber before physical activity.	Respect Show opponents respect at the end of the game.
5	To defend at third base and at home on force plays and tag plays.	Covering third base and home plate; advancing from second to third and third to home; fielding in the outfield.	Walk; balk; hit by pitcher; dropped third strike; foul tips; and batters hit by pitch.	Flexibility Stretch your muscles every day and always before any activity—this will help reduce the chance of injury.	Responsibility Always pay attention at practice and don't distract others.

12- to 13-Year-Olds (continued)

Week	Purpose	Tactics and skills	Rules and traditions	Fitness concepts	Character development concepts
6	To defend at third base and at home on force plays and tag plays.	Covering third base and home plate; advancing from second to third and third to home; fielding in the outfield.	Force play.	Muscular strength and endurance Work on improving each of the three areas of fitness.	Caring Encouraging each other with positive comments shows you care about your teammates.
7	To defend in the infield, holding runners at second or third on ground balls.	Covering second and third base to hold runners; looking runner back to base; leading off second base to delay throw to first base.	Overthrows.	Cardiorespiratory fitness You need to feel a little tired when exercising to improve cardiorespiratory fitness.	Respect Show respect for others by controlling yourself at all times.
8	To defend in the outfield, holding runners at second or third on fly-outs.	Catching fly balls; getting balls quickly back to infield; communicating with teammates; tagging on a fly.	Tagging up.	Cardiorespiratory fitness Use the "talk test" during aerobic exercise to determine how hard you're working.	Caring Encourage your teammates rather than getting angry or impatient with them.
9	To defend at second and third base, holding runners to those bases on ground balls.	Covering second and third base to hold runners; looking runner back to base; leading off second and third base to delay throw to first base.		Healthy habits Drink water often; drink before you get thirsty.	Respect Respect your body by practicing healthy habits.
10	To throw runners out trying to advance from second or third on fly-outs.	Backing up bases; tagging up; tagging runner out at home.	Review tag up rule.	Healthy habits Choose healthful foods rather than junk foods.	Responsibility Each player has responsibility to play together and put the team first.
11	To defend in the infield and outfield, executing proper backups.	Backing up bases.		Healthy habits Brush your teeth, get enough sleep, and stay away from drugs.	Caring Support your teammates.
12	To defend in the infield and outfield in various situations.	Executing skills and understanding tactics.	Maximum-run rule.	Reversibility principle If you stop being active, you lose your strength and endurance.	Respect Celebrate in a way that doesn't make your opponents feel bad.

Note: The plans in this Chapter are for use with the 12 and Up age group referenced in the YMCA's "Coaching Baseball and Softball" online course.

Practice Plans for 12- to 13-Year-Olds

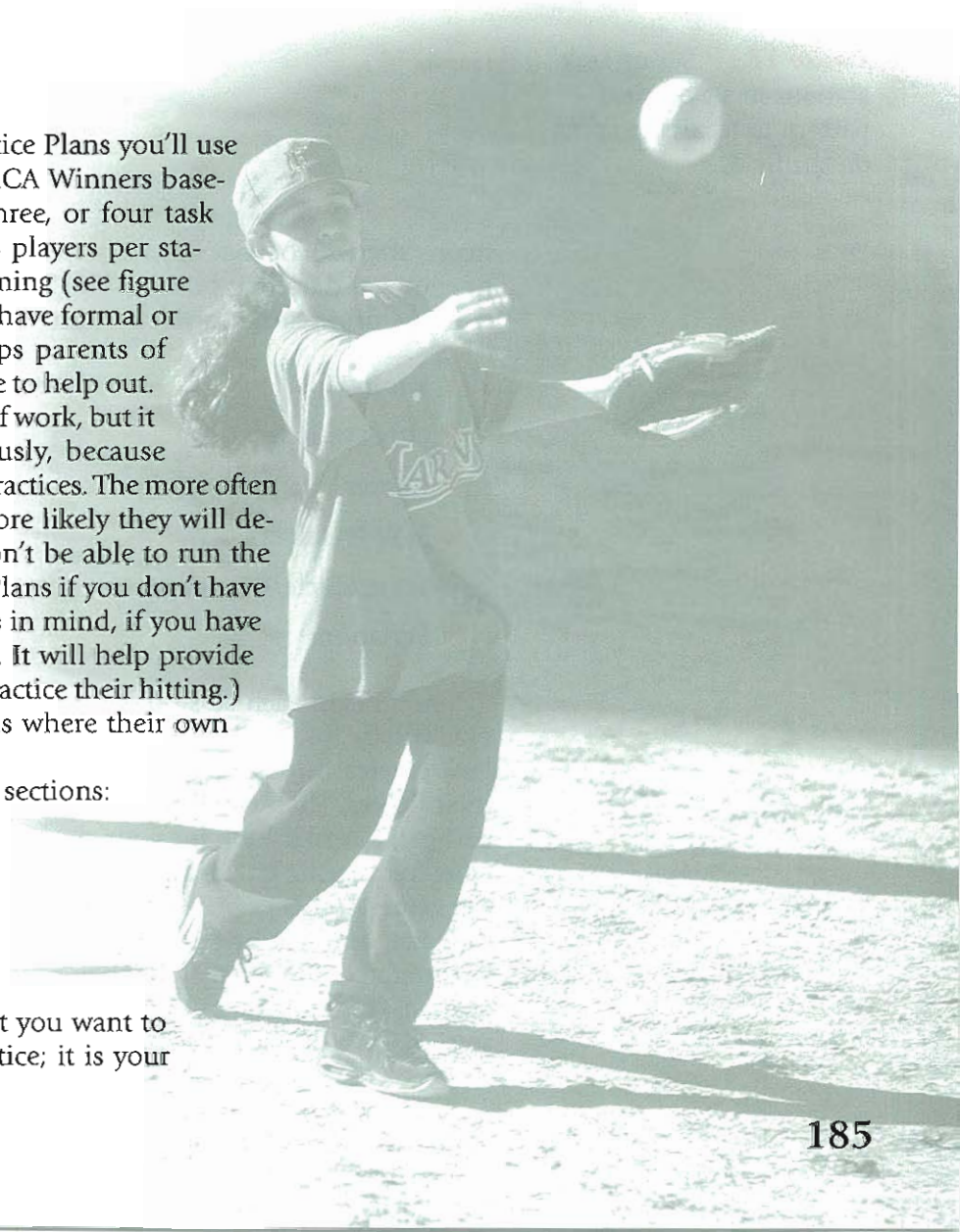


This chapter contains the 14 Practice Plans you'll use with your 12- to 13-year-old YMCA Winners baseball or softball players. Use two, three, or four task stations in a cloverleaf, with 4 to 8 players per station, to keep players active and learning (see figure 12.1). In doing so, you will need to have 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. (With this in mind, if you have access to a pitching machine, use it. It will help provide more opportunities for players to practice their hitting.) Don't assign parents to task stations where their own children are playing, however.

Each plan contains the following sections:

- ⊙ Purpose
- ⊙ Equipment
- ⊙ Practice Plan

"Purpose" sections focus on what you want to teach your players during that practice; it is your



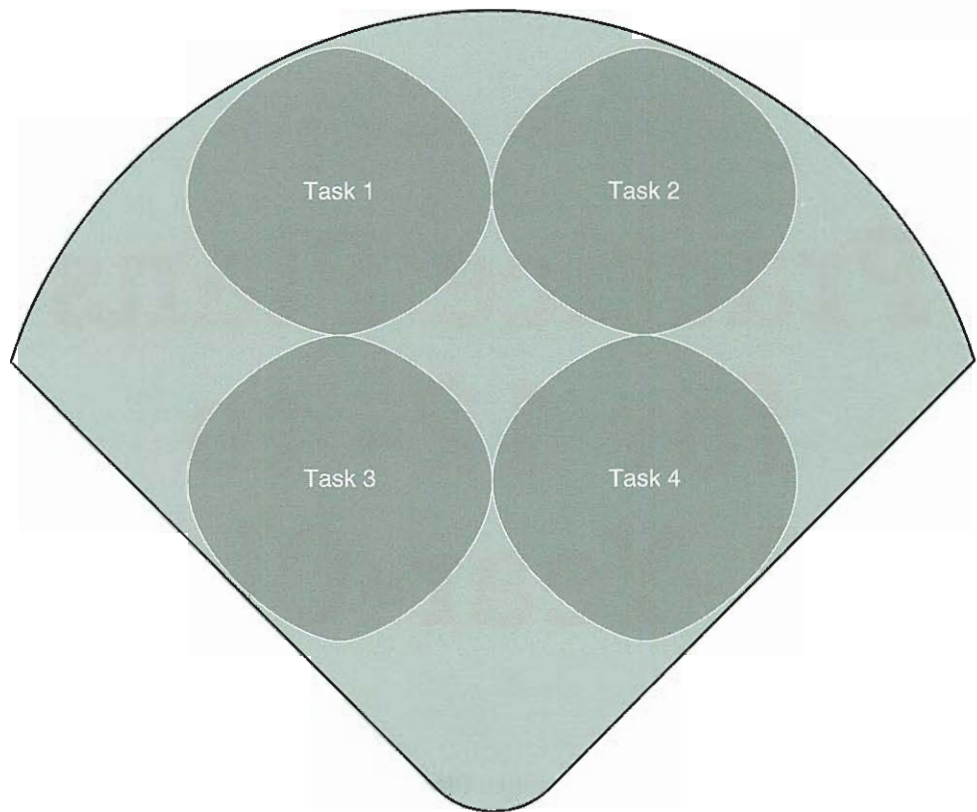


Figure 12.1 Set up task stations in a cloverleaf pattern to maximize space on the field.

main “theme” for that day. “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 through 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 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

☐T = Batting tee

△ = Cone

( ) = Optional player

# Week 1—Practice 1

## PURPOSE

To evaluate player performance and tactical understanding in all facets of the game.

## 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)

- Begin each practice with 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 demonstrate the stretching protocol (see chapter 15 for stretches for the major muscle groups). Ask a team leader to lead stretches in subsequent practices. After the team stretches, briefly discuss the fitness concept for that practice.

### **Key Idea:** General fitness

Gather team into a group. “Do we play to get in shape or do we get in shape to play? Let’s talk about both sides. What do you think?” Discuss for 2 or 3 minutes. “We should improve our fitness—cardiorespiratory, flexibility, and muscular strength and endurance—in order to play better ball. By playing we get lots of opportunities to improve our fitness. All season we’ll be talking more about the different areas of fitness and ways to improve those abilities.”

## 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.

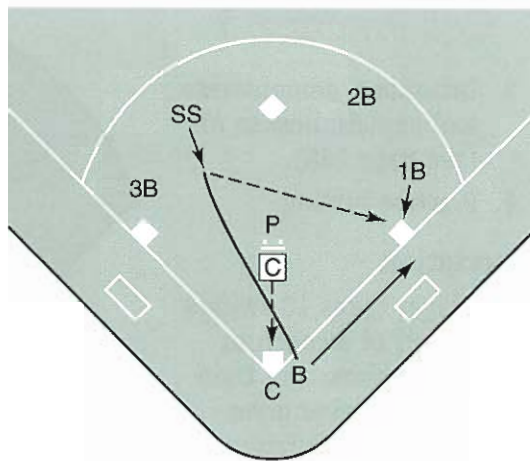
### **Goals**

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

# Week 1—Practice 1

## Description

Set up an infield (or two). Play a 6 v 6 game (you can use fewer players). The batting team hits off a tee, coach, or pitching machine. If pitched to, only allow two pitches per batter. The batter must hit a grounder to the infield. The side is retired after three runs or three outs, whichever comes first. Players rotate positions every inning.



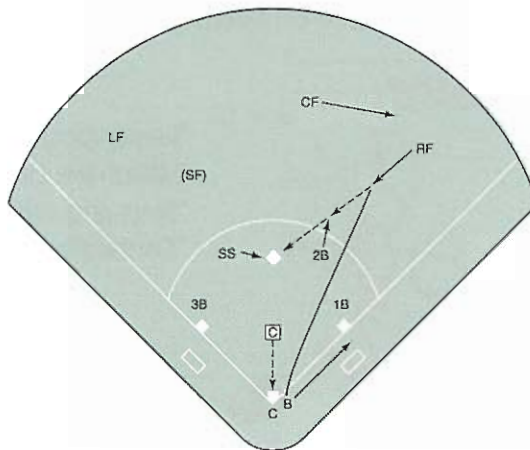
## Game 2 (10 minutes)

### Goals

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

### Description

Set up an outfield (or two), with 3 or 5 outfielders and 5 infielders (shortstop, catcher, first, second, and third base). Play a game. The batting team hits off a tee, coach, or pitching machine. If pitched to, allow only two pitches per batter. The batter hits to the outfield (infielders let the ball go through and only cover bases) and advances to as many bases as possible. The side is retired after three runs or three outs, whichever comes first. Players rotate positions every inning.



## Skill Practice (30 minutes)

Follow the opening game or games with a Skill Practice. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain a skill or tactic, and then attend to your 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.



Use the first practice to evaluate players to establish a baseline from which they can set individual goals for the season. Survey the players regarding the positions they prefer.



If a player is having difficulty, send him or her off with an assistant coach for some one-on-one attention for about 5 to 10 minutes.



# Week 1—Practice 1 (cont'd)

## Skill Practice 1

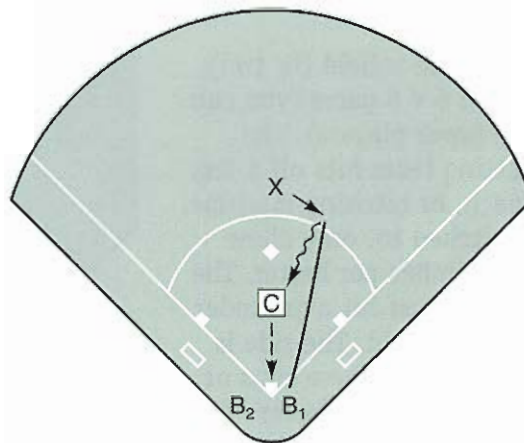
1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *hit* (see page 268).
2. Practice hitting.

### Description

Each player takes 10 swings in a row off of a coach or pitching machine and then rotates. One player gives feedback and instruction.

Remind players about safety:

Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter, practicing hitting off batting tees.



### COACH'S cues



"Ready position!"

"Watch the ball out of the pitcher's hand!"

"Step and swing fast!"

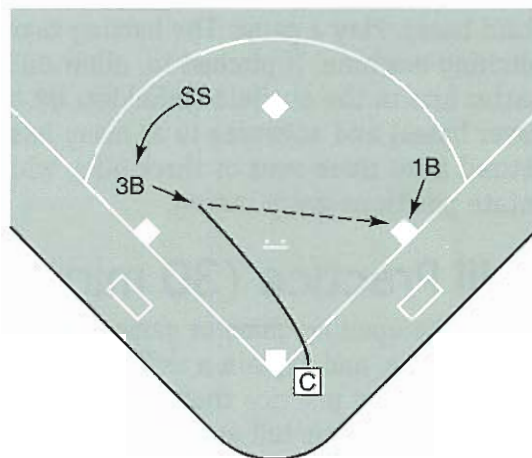
"Contact in the power zone!"

## Skill Practice 2

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *field ground balls* (see page 290).
2. Practice fielding grounders and *catching fly balls* (see page 293).

### Description

Players begin at two adjacent positions (shortstop and third base, second and first base, left and center fields, left and left center fields, center and right fields, or right center and right fields; include a first base player for infield practice). A player or coach hits or throws balls between the players, alternating among grounders, fly balls, and line drives. Players field and throw to the designated base.



# Week 1—Practice 1

Players rotate after three trials at each position. Focus on backups, charging the ball, quick transitions from catch to throw, and so on. Review positions for new players.



## For fielding grounders

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

## For advanced fielders

- "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!"

## 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."

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


### Description


Pitchers practice pitching. They should throw at *slow* to *moderate* speed, focusing on form. Catchers should work 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 3 (10 minutes)

Split the team in half and play an intrasquad game by dividing players into three teams of five. One team bats and the other two teams are in the field. Rotate teams at bat and in the field.



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

 If possible, assign an assistant coach or a parent to be in charge of pitchers and catchers. Their practice should be closely monitored for safety and proper technique.

 Set up time after practice to work with pitchers, about 30 minutes if possible. This allows them to learn skills and tactics along with the rest of the team. You can also more accurately monitor how much each pitcher has thrown during practice.

## 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. Following the discussion, wrap up the practice with a few comments (see below).

### **Key Idea:** Four core values

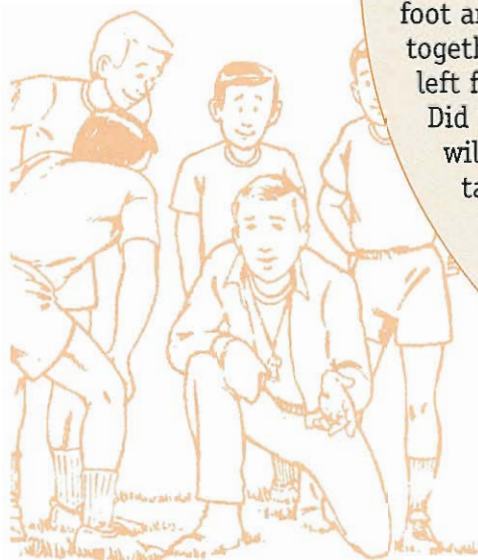
Gather team into a single-file line. "Everyone turn to your right so the person to the side of you is now in front of you. Put your arms on their shoulders. We are going to walk forward, as a group, using first the right foot and then the left. We will walk slowly so take your time so we all move together. Get ready with your right foot, now step; get ready with your left foot, now step." Repeat for four steps. "Let go of your teammates. Did we have to work together to walk as a group? We did. All season we will need to work together, with everyone doing their part. We will talk about four values that all players should have—caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. We need to understand and use these values or qualities every practice and game."

### **Wrap-Up**

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

## Variations

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. If you have only one or two players without previous experience, assign an assistant coach to work beside them throughout the practice.



# 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. "Last practice we talked about different kinds of fitness. Can you tell me what they were?" Listen to responses until they say *cardio-respiratory*, *flexibility*, and *muscular strength and endurance*. "What are some examples of physical activities to improve cardiorespiratory fitness?" Discuss examples (walking, running, swimming, and so on).

"Muscular strength and endurance?" Discuss examples (hitting, throwing). "Flexibility?" Discuss examples (leg and arm stretches). "By working hard at all the practices and outside of practice you can help attain the overall fitness you need for playing."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

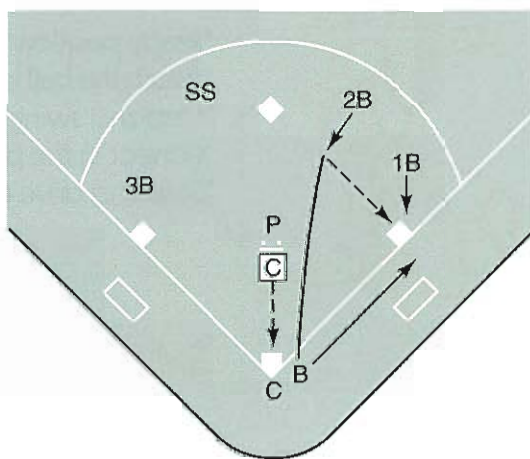
"Zero-Zero"  
(zero outs and  
zero runners on base)

### 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, coach, or pitching machine. Batters must hit grounders to the infield. Players score a point by reaching first base safely. Each play begins with the bases empty. The side is retired after three points or three outs, whichever comes first.



## PURPOSE

To defend in the infield on ground balls hit with no one on base. The focus is on fielding grounders and making accurate throws to first base, as well as demonstrating proper base-running technique from home to first.

## Equipment

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

# Week 1—Practice 2 (cont'd)

Each team should keep track of the points 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, 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)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

Players practice hitting. Each player takes 10 swings in a row off of a coach or pitching machine and then rotates. One player gives feedback and instruction. Another player retrieves balls and returns them to the coach. Remind players about safety: Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter, practicing hitting off batting tees (see page 190 for a diagram).

#### COACH'S cues



"Ready position!"

"Watch the ball out of the pitcher's hand!"

"Step and swing fast!"

"Contact in the power zone!"

"Step and drive to first base!"

### Skill Practice 2

#### Description

Players practice fielding and making plays at the proper base. Players begin at two adjacent positions (shortstop and third base, second and first base, left and center fields, left and left center fields, center and right fields, or right center and right fields; include a first base player for infield practice). A player or coach hits or throws balls between the players, alternating among grounders, fly balls, and line drives. Players field and throw to the designated base (have baserunners run to the base). Rotate after three trials at each position. Focus on backups, charging the ball, quick transitions from catch to throw, and so on (see page 190 for a diagram).



Allow players to assist with running the practice. They can rotate the responsibility to hit or throw to fielders during Skill Practices. Thus each player can take responsibility for his or her own development as a player and team member. Players will need guidance, of course.

# Week 1—Practice 2

## Skill Practice 3

### Description

Players practice fielding grounders and throwing to first base. Place two players at shortstop and two players at third base, one behind the other (see page 135 for a diagram). They will take turns fielding the ball. Also include a first base player. Extra players serve as runners. Place one cone about halfway between home plate and third base and another cone on the pitcher's mound. A player or coach hits ground balls, alternating between third base and shortstop. Fielders charge the ball, attempt to field the ball before it reaches the imaginary line between the cones, 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 runners (e.g., 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. Review rules related to *offensive interference* and *defensive interference* (see pages 297 and 296, respectively).

### For fielding grounders

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

### For advanced fielders

- “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!”

### 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!”)

### COACH'S cues




## 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 work on technique and also give the

### COACH'S point

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

# Week 1—Practice 2 (cont'd)

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: Respect

Gather team into a circle near two cones about 10 feet apart. "What should you do if your opponents are talking trash, complaining to the umpires, and doing things that are not fair?" Listen to their responses. "Stand at this cone if you should continue to play your game and be polite. Stand at this cone if you should get back at the other team by playing the same way and complaining to the umpires." All players should vote. Ask players why they voted the way they did. Have players at the "complaining" cone think of other options instead of complaining. "You should not change the way you play your game or stop showing respect to your opponents or the umpires. It's important to show respect even if the other team is not."

#### Wrap-Up

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



### Variations

- Games may be played 4 v 4 or 5 v 5, depending on the number of players per team.
- Isolate specific situations to refine skill and tactical understanding.
- If league rules permit leadoffs, modify Skill Practice 2 to allow a runner to start at first and practice leading off during the next at-bat. Direct the defense to make no attempt for that runner at second. Or, to extend the drill, that runner can be included as part of the situation.

# Week 2—Practice 1

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

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

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Overload principle

Gather team into a group. “Who can tell me what *overload* means?” Listen to their responses. “If your bodies do a little bit more work than they have done before, they will adapt and be able to do even more. We’re talking about small amounts of work or activity—too much harms your body and causes injuries. Your fitness will improve, and you’ll be able to do more activity in practice before getting too tired. Let’s use the acronym F-I-T—what do you think it stands for?” Listen to their responses. “*F* stands for *frequency* or how often you practice the activity; *I* stands for *intensity* or how hard you practice or play; and *T* stands for *time* or how long you practice the activity. FIT is a good way to remember how to use the overload principle to improve our fitness.”

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

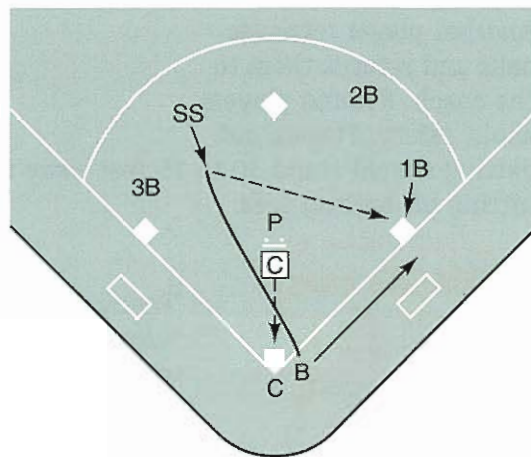
“Zero-Zero”  
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### Goals

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, coach, or pitching machine.



## PURPOSE

To defend in the infield on ground balls hit with no runners on base. The focus is on fielding grounders, making accurate throws to first base, covering first base properly, and demonstrating proper technique in running from home to 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 2—Practice 1 (cont'd)

- Batters must hit grounders to the infield. Players score a point by reaching first base safely. Each play begins with the bases empty. 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.



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 the target until you're ready to step and throw, 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)

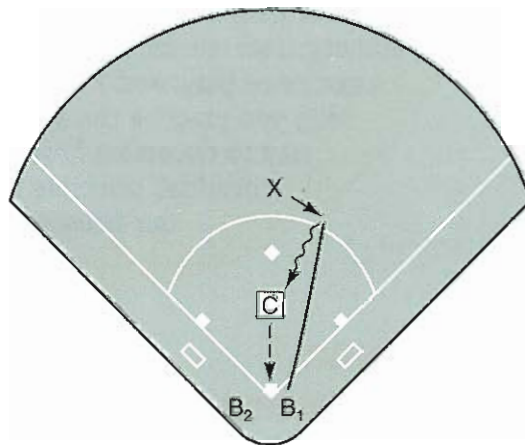
### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

Players practice hitting. Each player takes 10 swings in a row off of a coach or pitching machine and then rotates. One player gives feedback and instruction.

Another player retrieves balls and returns them to the coach. Remind players about safety: Players not

batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter, practicing hitting off batting tees.



#### COACH'S cues



"Ready position!"

"Watch the ball out of the pitcher's hand!"

"Step and swing fast!"

"Contact in the power zone!"

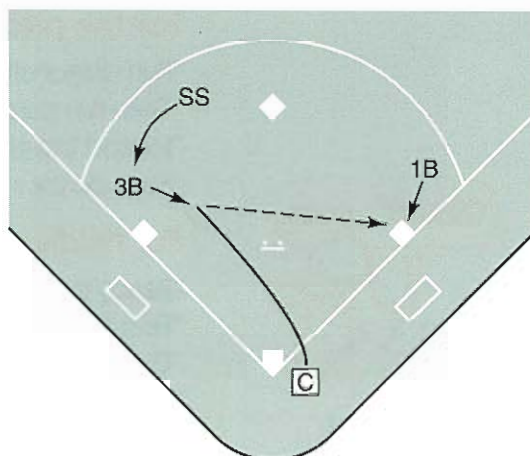
"Step and drive to first base!"

# Week 2—Practice 1

## Skill Practice 2

### Description

Players practice fielding and making plays at the proper base. Players begin at two adjacent positions (short-stop and third base, second and first base, left and center fields, left and left center fields, center and right fields, or right center and right fields; include a first base player for infield practice). A player or coach hits or throws balls between the players, alternating among grounders, fly balls, and line drives. Players field and throw to the designated base (have base-runners run to the base). Players rotate after three trials at each position. Focus on backups, charging the ball, quick transitions from catch to throw, and so on.

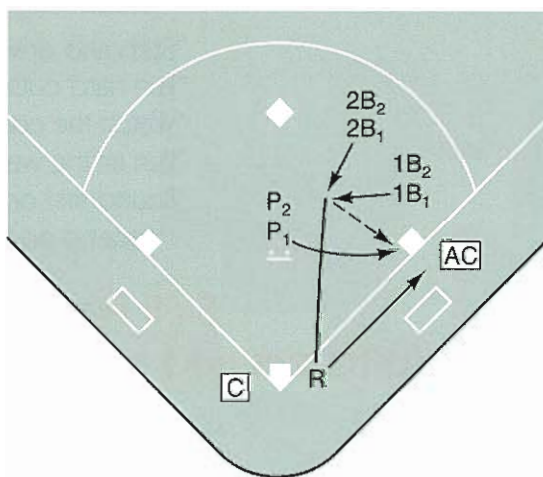


## Skill Practice 3

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how the *pitcher covers first base* (see page 290).
2. Practice this skill within Skill Practice 3.

### Description

Players practice fielding grounders and throwing to first base. Place two players at second base, two at first base, and two at the pitcher's mound, one behind the other. They will take turns fielding the ball. Extra players serve as runners. A player or coach hits ground balls, alternating among second base, first base, and the pitcher's position. 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 runners (e.g., 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.



# Week 2—Practice 1 (cont'd)

## COACH'S cues



### For the pitcher covering first

- “Run diagonally toward the first base line!”
- “Then run parallel with the runner!”
- “Extend the glove!”
- “Step on the nearest corner of the base!”

### For fielding grounders

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

### For advanced fielders

- “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!”

### 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!”)

## 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 work 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.



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

# Week 2—Practice 1

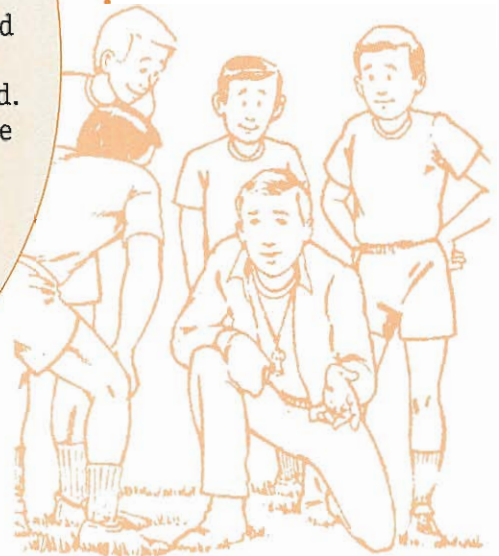
## Team Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Respect

Gather team into a group. "Remember the scenario I talked about in the last practice? The opponent who wasn't playing fair? If you play against a team that does those types of things, how should you handle the end of the game? Stand at this cone if you think you should still go to every player and the coach to shake hands. Stand at this cone if you think you should just walk away." Ask players why they voted as they did. Then separate the team into two groups. Practice an end of the game line-up for both pleasant and fair opponents and for rude opponents. "You should always show your opponents respect by shaking hands at the end of the game, no matter what happens during the game."

### Wrap-Up

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



## Variations

- Games may be played 4 v 4 or 5 v 5, depending on the number of players per team.
- Isolate specific situations to refine skill and tactical understanding.
- If league rules permit leadoffs, modify Skill Practice 2 to allow a runner to start at first and practice leading off during the next at-bat. Direct the defense to make no attempt for that runner at second. Or, to extend the drill, that runner can be included as part of the situation.

# Week 2—Practice 2

## PURPOSE

To defend in the infield on ground balls in force play situations at second base. The focus is on demonstrating proper technique in making the force play, hitting, and 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)

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

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

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Overload principle

Gather team into a group. “What does FIT stand for and when do we use it?” Listen to their responses. Discuss frequency, intensity, and time. “I want you to choose a letter of FIT and demonstrate it.” As players give examples and demonstrate, encourage team to try also. If frequency is chosen, increase repetitions. If intensity, they should try harder or faster. If time, lengthen amount. Encourage sport-related activities such as running and throwing. “You need to practice skills and running outside of practice and participate in other physical activities and exercise.

This will give your body enough workload to overload and improve your fitness levels or abilities.”

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

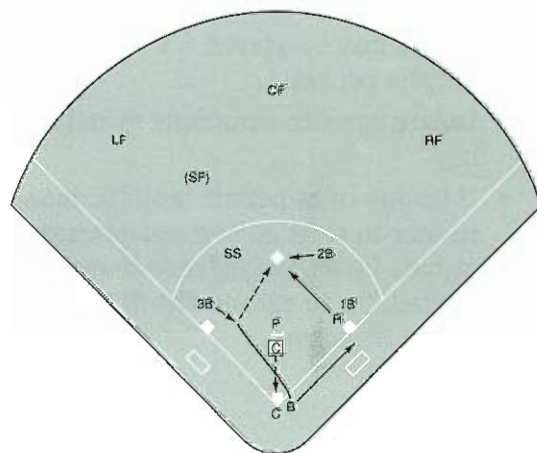
### “Movin’ on Up”

#### 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 team starts with a runner at first base. Batters hit off a tee, coach, or pitching machine 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 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.



## COACH'S point

 Review rules related to baserunning, including *defensive interference* and *offensive interference* (see pages 297 and 296, respectively) and *leading off* (Tables 14.1 and 14.2 on pages 300 and 301).

# Week 2—Practice 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 on contact. Stop quickly by leaning back; bending hips, knees, and ankles to absorb force; and holding onto the base with your foot.

Coach: When can you leave the base?

Players: When pitcher releases the ball. (Note: Check league rules.)

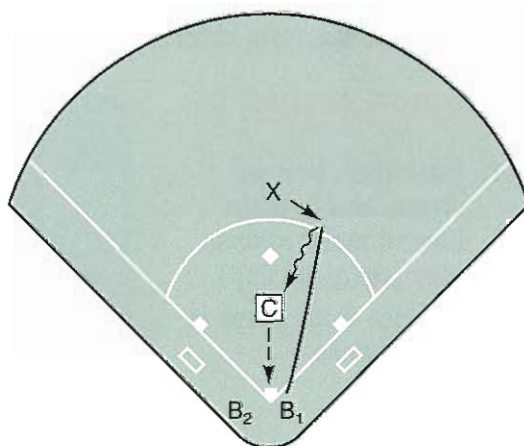


## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

Players practice hitting. Each player takes 10 swings in a row off a coach or pitching machine and then rotates. One player gives feedback and instruction. Another player retrieves balls and returns them to the coach. Remind players about safety: Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter, practicing hitting off batting tees.



#### COACH'S cues



"Ready position!"

"Watch the ball out of the pitcher's hand!"

"Step and swing fast!"

"Contact in the power zone!"

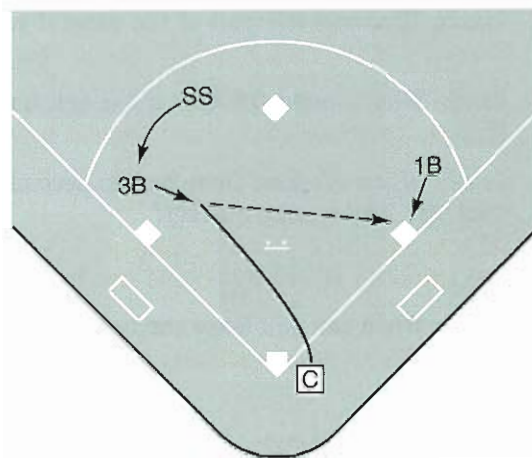
### Skill Practice 2

#### Description

Players practice fielding and making plays at the proper base. Players begin at two adjacent positions (shortstop and third base, second and

# Week 2—Practice 2 (cont'd)

first base, left and center fields, left and left center fields, center and right fields, or right center and right fields; include a first base player for infield practice). A player or coach hits or throws balls between the players, alternating grounders, fly balls, and line drives. Players field and throw to the designated base (have baserunners run to the base). Players rotate after three trials at each position. Focus on backups, charging the ball, quick transitions from catch to throw, and so on.



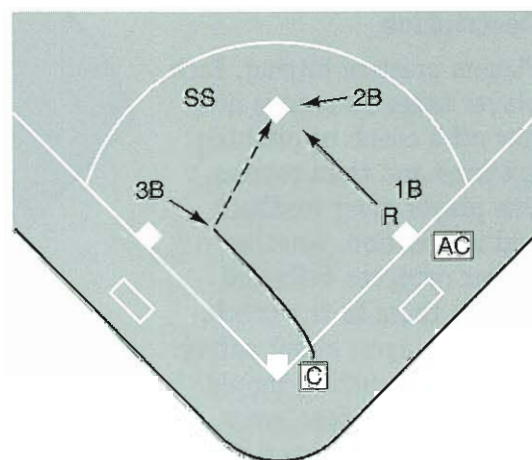
## Skill Practice 3

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 give 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 to *leading off* (see tables 14.1 and 14.2 on pages 300 and 301, respectively).



### COACH'S point

Encourage players to start in their proper positions so 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.

### 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!”

# Week 2—Practice 2

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

### Description

Pitchers practice pitching. They should throw at *moderate* speed, focusing on form. Catchers should work 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. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

## Team Circle (5 minutes)


### Key Idea: Responsibility

Gather team into a group. “What should be on your ‘mental list’ before you come to every practice?” Listen to responses and then lead discussion about bringing proper equipment (a water bottle, glove); being mentally prepared to work hard and learn new ideas; being well rested; and having eaten well and drank water during the day. “Each player is responsible for preparing for each practice before practice starts. It’s your responsibility to the team to come to practice prepared. Good players are prepared for all practices and games.”

### Wrap-Up

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



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





# Week 2—Practice 2 (cont'd)

## Variations

- Set up a situation, similar to Skill Practice 3, where players have to flip the ball to the player covering second base.
- A practice task can be designed that focuses on fielding a bunt by infielders. For example, set up a 6 v 6 game and alternate situations (no runners on, runner on first, runner on second, and so on). This will help work on positioning, coverage, and backups as well.
- During the pitcher's/catcher's practice, set up situations so that the catcher can practice throwing to the bases as well as catching and throwing during a pitch-out.

### For fast-pitch

You can also use Skill Practice 1 to practice bunting. Review rules and terminology related to bunting (*bunt*, *sacrifice bunt*, *squeeze play*, see pages 296 and 298, respectively).

### COACH'S cues



### Bunting

- “Square away!”
- “Slide the hand down!”
- “Fingers back!”
- “Set the angle!”
- “Watch the ball hit the bat!”
- “Absorb on contact!”

# Week 3

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

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

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Overload principle

Gather team into a group. "What does FIT stand for, and when do we use it?" Listen to their responses. Have a review discussion. "When we think about the second area of FIT, what is it? *Intensity* or how hard you practice the activity. Raise your hand if you think that the only way to increase the intensity of an activity or make it harder is to go faster." Encourage all players to vote. "You can overload the work your body is doing by going faster on a run or by doing wind sprints, for example. Every time you run a greater distance or faster, your body will adapt and you'll be able to do more next time."

## 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, coach, or pitching machine (see page 197 for a diagram). Batters must hit grounders to the infield. Players score a point by reaching first base safely, and, if possible, advancing on the basepaths. Additional points are scored for each base to which the runner advances. The side is retired after six 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 in the infield on tag play situations at third base. The focus is on covering third base on a tag play and 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'S  
point

 Encourage players to communicate on every play in all Game and Skill Practice sections.



## COACH'S point

☞ Review rules related to batting (see page 296).

☞ Do Skill Practices sequentially or concurrently. Allow players to run drills. Coaches and/or parents can directly assist or monitor player-run drills.

## COACH'S point

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

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

Players: Sometimes, but not always.

Coach: Who's responsible for covering first base on force plays?

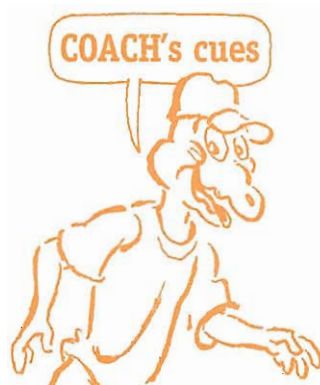
Players: It depends on the situation.

## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

Players practice hitting. Set up batting tees within 5 feet of a fence (see page 150 for a diagram). Batters hit into the fence. Each player takes 10 swings 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.



“Ready position!”

“Watch the ball on the batting tee!”

“Step and swing fast!”

“Contact in the power zone!”

### Skill Practice 2

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

#### Description

Play a three-inning, 3 v 3 game with a pitcher, second and first base players, and three batters (see page 150 for a diagram). 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 a point every time he or she reaches first safely. Players rotate positions each inning.

# Week 3

## 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 fielders at first, second, third, and shortstop, and three batters (see page 151 for a diagram). The offense starts 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



#### For making a 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 4

(pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

### Description

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

☞ Throughout the season, focus on covering and backing up bases.

#### COACH'S point

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



## Team Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Honesty

Gather team into a group near two cones about 10 feet apart. Identify three honesty situations that are important for your team to practice. First, ask players how they would respond, and then discuss how you would prefer them to respond. "Being honest about a play during the game and in practice is an important part of the game. Good players are honest even when an umpire, coach, or opponent didn't see it happen."

### Wrap-Up

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

## Variations

- Some situations will call for a player to flip the ball to the player covering the base. Players may need to practice this skill for control and accuracy.
- Each situation can be broken down further: for example, use only a pitcher and first base player, along with a couple of runners. A player or coach can hit a ball to the first base player and have the pitcher cover first on the play.
- If league rules permit leadoffs, the first base player will need to learn how to tag a player returning to first from a leadoff. This situation can be integrated into Skill Practice 3 or practiced separately.

### For fast-pitch

If league rules permit bunting, repeat Skill Practices 2 and 3, except have the batter bunt instead of hit away.

# Week 4

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

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

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Flexibility

Gather team into a group. "It's important to stretch our muscles. What area of fitness does that improve? Right: flexibility. It's also important to stretch muscles that have been used the most in a sport or activity. What do we use the most? Our legs and arms. I am going to show you the proper way to stretch the different muscles in your legs and arms." Choose stretches that include quadriceps (front of thigh), hamstrings (back of thigh), calves/Achilles tendon (back of the lower leg and ankle), arms, and deltoids (shoulders). Remind players to get in position and hold their stretch, not to bounce, and that they shouldn't feel pain.

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

### "Movin' on Up"

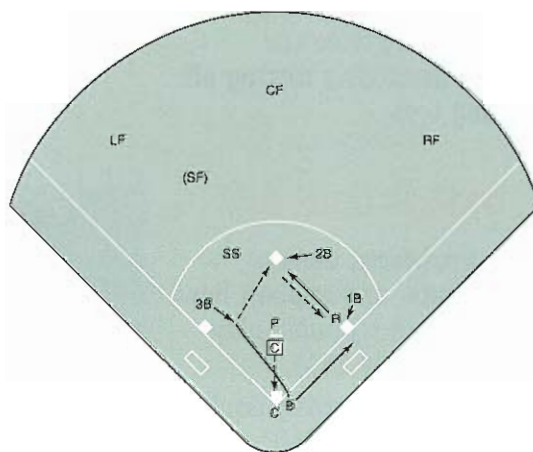
#### Goals

The offense tries to advance the runner to second base. The defense tries to turn a double play.

#### Description

Set up an infield (or two).

Play a 6 v 6 game (you can use more players per team). The batting team starts with a runner at first base. Batters hit off a tee, coach, or pitching machine and run to first base. If the runner gets to second base safely, the offense scores a point. The runner does not advance past second. The fielding team attempts to turn a double play. If they do, they score three points. The side is retired after three points or three double plays, whichever comes first.



### PURPOSE

To defend in the infield by making a double play, from second base to first base, with a runner on first. The focus is on demonstrating proper technique in executing the double play.

### 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:** Who covers second when the ball is hit to the left side of the infield? To the right side?

**Players:** Second base player (left side); shortstop (right side).

**Coach:** Where should the player covering second receive the throw? Why?

**Players:** On the "ball-side" of the base—so he or she doesn't interfere with the runner.

**Coach:** What should the player covering second do to make the play as quickly as possible?

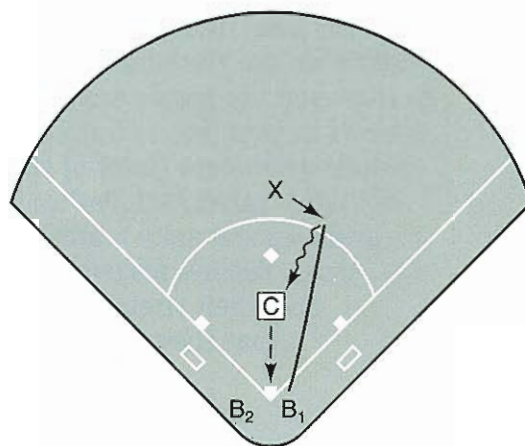
**Players:** Move quickly, use good footwork, stay out of runner's path, make a quick transition from catch to throw.

## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

Players practice hitting. Each player takes 10 swings in a row off of a coach or pitching machine and then rotates. One player gives feedback and instruction. Another player retrieves balls and returns them to the coach. Remind players about safety: Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter, practicing hitting off batting tees.

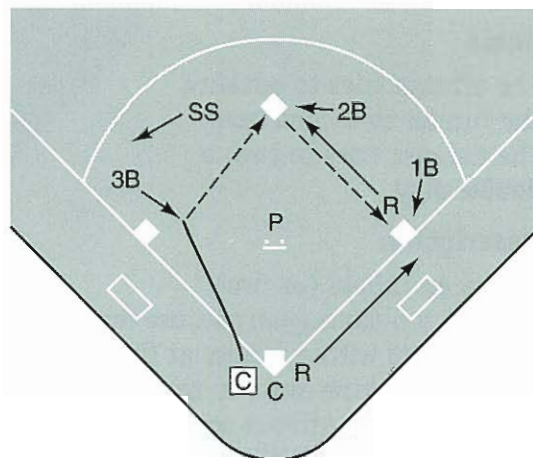


### Skill Practice 2

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to turn a *double play* (see page 261).
2. Practice turning double plays on the left side of the infield.

#### Description

Set up a full infield and place a runner on first base. A player or coach hits balls to the third base player or



# Week 4

shortstop or a player can hit and run to first. The third base player or shortstop throws to the second base player, who forces the lead runner and throws to first base to complete the double play. Rotate after four attempts at turning the double play. Additional players serve as runners.

## COACH'S cues



### For second base player turning the double play

- "Time your approach to second!"
- "Adjust to the position of ball, incoming throw, and runner!"
- "Crossover if coming from behind base!"
- "Inside pivot if covering inside base!"
- "Rocker step if there is no need to cross base!"
- "Catch with two hands or one hand if it is a flip!"
- "Step and throw quickly!"

### For baserunning

- "Take off on contact!"
- "Run hard!"

## Skill Practice 3

### Description

Repeat Skill Practice 2, but have the shortstop take the throw at second base. Hit or throw balls to the second and first base players to begin the double play. Rotate after four attempts. Additional players serve as runners.

## COACH'S cues



### For shortstop turning the double play

- "Cover the bag!"
- "Tag the bag with the left foot, step right, and pivot!"
- "Keep feet moving to first after the throw!"
- "Adjust to the position of the ball, incoming throw, and runner!"




- ☞ Too much focus on footwork may confuse some players. Focus more on adjusting to the incoming runner and timing the approach with the incoming throw.
- ☞ Review who covers second on a ball hit to the pitcher (see page 262).





## COACH'S point

 Pitchers and catchers can participate in 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 *moderate to moderately fast* speed, focusing on form. Catchers should work 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: Respect

Gather team into two groups. "Think about professional teams. What ways do they show respect for their opponents?" Discuss with players. Lead discussion to talking about saying positive comments such as "good game" and "nice play today" along with a hand shake. "Let's say this is the end of a game. Your two groups are professional teams that played against each other. Show me what you do at the end of the game." Use one of the discussion examples for players to try. "When you say positive comments to your opponents at the end of a game in addition to shaking or slapping hands, it shows you respect your opponents. Good professional players show they respect opponents."

### Wrap-Up

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

# Week 4

## Variations

- Identify some players for outfield positions and have them practice fielding fly balls instead of doing Skill Practices 2 and 3.
- Review or practice flips during Skill Practices 2 or 3.
- Review or practice throws from one knee. For example, when the second base player fields a grounder he or she stays low, kneels on the left knee, and throws overhand to the shortstop covering second base. This keeps the player low and saves time used to stand and then throw. It is also less likely that the player will overthrow the base.
- A practice task can be designed that focuses on fielding a bunt by infielders. For example, set up a 6 v 6 game and alternate situations (e.g., no runners on, runner on first, runner on second, and so on). This will help work on positioning, coverage, and backups as well.

### For fast-pitch

Double plays are rare, even with high school teams, and therefore may not be useful to practice. Spend time focusing on leaving the base on the pitcher's release. Or, repeat Week 3 with a focus on sacrifice bunts.

# Week 5

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

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

### PURPOSE

To defend at third base and home plate on force plays and tag plays. The focus is on covering third base and home plate properly and demonstrating proper fielding technique in the outfield.

### Equipment

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

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Flexibility

"Your muscles need to be stretched every day to prevent injuries. Lie down on your back with one leg up in the air. Stretch your knee toward your face and hold it there for 10 counts. Now let's try the stretch again. Repeat once more, holding the stretch now to 15 counts and stretching your leg a bit further. You should not stretch so far that you hurt yourself, lock your knee, or feel pain. Just stretch until you feel a gentle pull. Stretching helps to prevent injuries and improves your flexibility, an important part of fitness."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

"3 for 3"

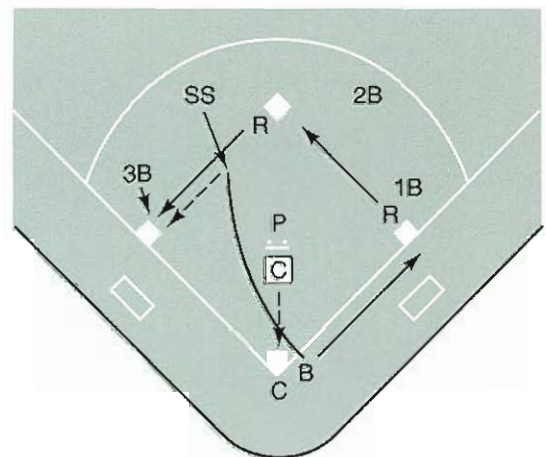
### Goals

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.



# Week 5

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

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 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. Running from third to home you look for the on-deck batter, who should be signaling you to slide or stay up.

Coach: What does the catcher do if the runner advances to home plate?

Players: Catch the ball and tag the runner out.

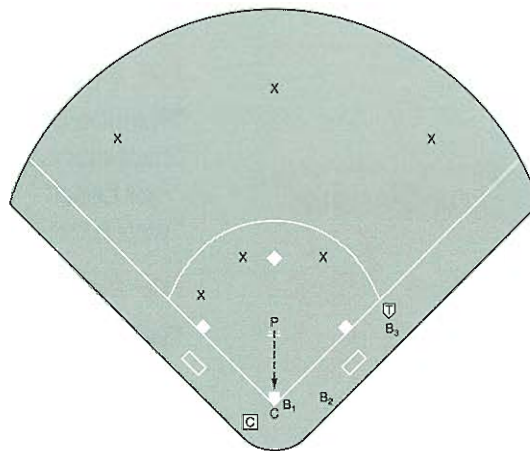


## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### 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 that 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. Review rules related to *walks*, *balks*, *dropped third strikes*, *foul tips*, and *batters hit by a pitch* (see pages 299, 296, and 297).

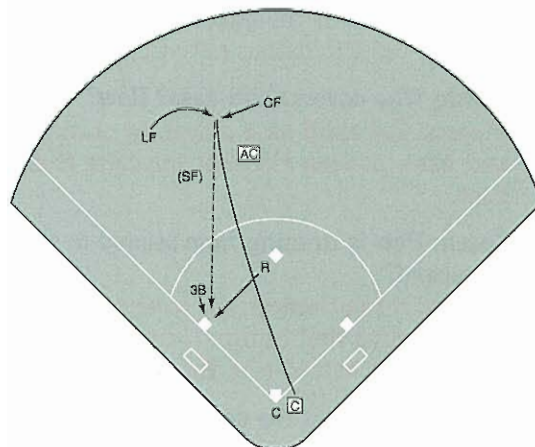


Have players use batting tees for additional practice swings while waiting to bat.

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



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

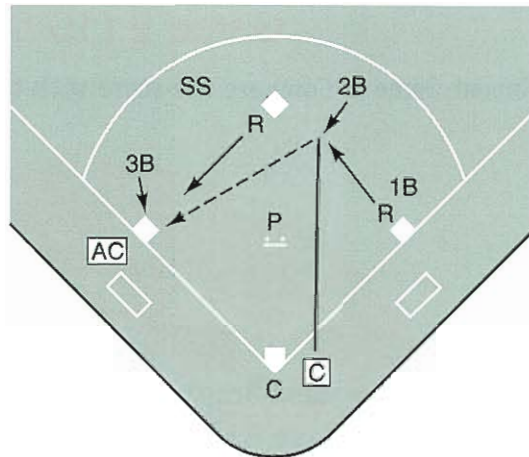
# Week 5

## 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. A player or coach hits grounders to each infield position.

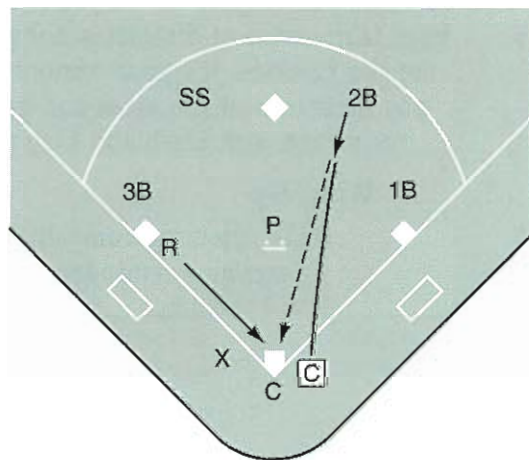
Infielders field the ball and make the play at third base. Players rotate after three trials at each position. Position a coach at third base to give cues on the proper technique required to cover third on a force-out situation.



## Skill Practice 4

### Description

Practice tag plays at home plate. Repeat Skill Practice 3, except the baserunner begins on third base and tries to score. Position a coach or parent at home to help with proper positioning and techniques to tag runners out. Also have a player serve as the on-deck batter and signal the incoming runner to slide or stay up (see section on sliding, page 274).



## Skill Practice 5 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

### Description

Pitchers practice pitching. They should throw at *moderate to moderately fast* speed, focusing on form. Catchers should work 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.



Depending on the number of coaches and stations, you may not have time for Skill Practice 4. The following practice is identical to this practice. If you don't have time for Skill Practice 4, make sure you practice it next week.

Pitchers and catchers can participate in a few other Skill Practices, then complete Skill Practice 5.

## 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 team into two groups. Give one group a ball and have them play catch. Ask one player to try to distract the rest of the group. Continue this for one minute. Bring the team together as a group. "How should you respond to someone who is trying to distract you?" Discuss their responses. "If you're at practice and talk to your teammates or distract other players, you're interrupting the practice. It's your responsibility to the team to pay attention at practices and games so you and your teammates can learn and play your best."

#### 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 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.

#### For fast-pitch

Focus on player positioning and base coverage for a possible squeeze play.

# Week 6

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

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

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

**Key Idea:** Muscular strength and endurance

Gather team into a group. Have the players play catch without telling them how hard or fast to throw. Then have them spread out further. Direct them to throw as hard and as fast as they can 10 times. Have them come back to the group. "Did everyone see how during the second times they threw the ball harder and faster? When you do that, what area or component of fitness do you improve?" Listen to their responses. "Muscular strength and endurance. When you throw harder you are improving your strength; when you throw faster, you're improving your endurance."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

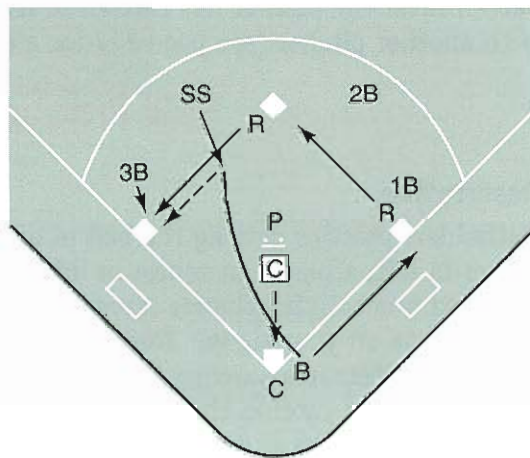
### "3 for 3"

#### 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 at third base and home plate on force plays and tag plays. The focus is on covering third base and home and demonstrating proper fielding technique in the outfield.

## Equipment

- Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- Two 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 outfielder?

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 outside edge of the base.

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

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. Running from third to home you look for the on-deck batter, who should be signaling you to slide or stay up.

Coach: What does the catcher do if the runner advances to home plate?

Players: Catch the ball and tag the runner out.

## 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 that 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 217 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 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. Repeat with a runner advancing to home plate (see page 218 for a diagram).

# Week 6

## 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!”

## Skill Practice 3

### Description

Infielders practice the force play at third base. Place players at all infield positions (see page 219 for a diagram). Extra players serve as baserunners, taking off from first and second base on your signal. A player or coach hits 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

### Description

Practice tag plays at home plate. Repeat Skill Practice 3, except the baserunner begins on third base and tries to score. Position a coach or parent at home to help with proper positioning and techniques to tag runners out. Also have a player serve as the on-deck batter and signal the incoming runner to slide or stay up.

## Skill Practice 5 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

### Description

Pitchers practice pitching. They should throw at *moderate* to *moderately fast* speed, focusing on form. Catchers should work on technique and

## COACH'S point



👉 Review the *force play* rule if necessary (see page 256).

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

## COACH'S point



👉 Pitchers and catchers can participate in a few other Skill Practices, then complete Skill Practice 5.

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: Caring

Gather team and separate into two groups, each with a ball. "Players in each group should throw the ball to each other. As you play catch I want everybody to be saying something good about the throw and catch and the people throwing and catching. I should be hearing constant talk." Encourage excitement about the activity by clapping and providing players with your positive comments. "We'll keep playing catch until everyone has had two turns throwing and catching. Let me know when you're done." Wait for players to signal that they are finished. "What are some of the positive comments that you heard? Saying positive comments shows you care."

#### 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 outfielders on one field and infielders on another field, both working on the same situation.

### For fast-pitch

- Focus on player positioning and base coverage for a possible squeeze play.
- Focus on baserunning during a squeeze play.
- Focus on coverage during a steal from first to second base.

# Week 7

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Jog three times around the bases. Play catch with a partner.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Cardiorespiratory fitness

Gather team into a circle. "I want everyone to run to second base and back. Before you go, describe how your lungs feel and how fast your breathing rate is. How tired is your body?" Listen to their responses. "When you're done running, I'll ask you the same question and see if the answers are faster or slower or more tired than before. Ready? Go!" Repeat the question. Discuss their responses.

"To strengthen your heart and lungs, you need to run and make your heart beat faster and breathe faster.

You need to feel a little tired while running to improve your cardiorespiratory fitness. Checking how you feel tells you that you are running fast enough to improve the strength of your lungs and heart."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

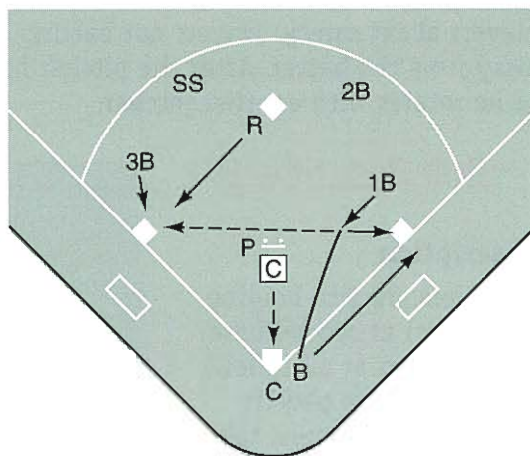
### "Stayin' Alive"

#### 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. The side is retired after nine points or three outs, whichever comes first.



## PURPOSE

To defend in the infield, holding runners to second or third base on ground balls. The focus is on covering second and third base, looking runners back to the base, and making the play at first base. Baserunners will focus on leading off second and third to delay a throw to first.

## Equipment

- Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- Two 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 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 run to third if the throw goes to first.

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

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



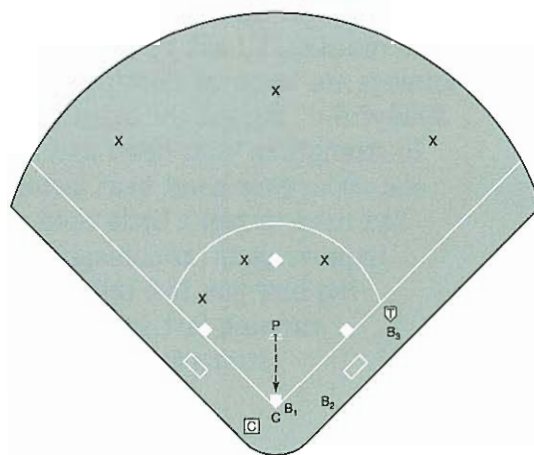
**COACH'S point**  
Have a coach's corner, where players can go for extra help. Parents can go for extra help. Parents can be responsible for providing help. You can "recommend" it to the player or the player can go on his or her own. Players go to the coach's corner for 5 to 15 minutes to practice a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

## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

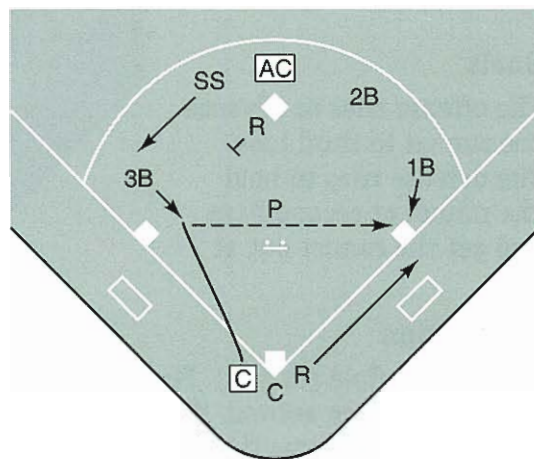
Players practice hitting. One of your pitchers throws for five batters, 10 pitches each. Players on deck should take practice swings, pretending that they are the hitter. The batter third in line should work on a batting tee. One player or coach gives feedback. The other players retrieve balls and roll 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

Infielders practice holding the runner at second base. Place players at all infield positions. Extra players serve as baserunners, taking off from behind home plate and second base on your signal. A player or coach hits 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



# Week 7

second base to help with proper leadoff technique as well as with proper positioning of the shortstop and second base player.

## COACH'S cues



### 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

Repeat Skill Practice 2, except with a runner at third.

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

### Description

Pitchers practice pitching. They should throw at *moderate* to *full* speed, focusing on form. Catchers should work 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. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

## COACH'S point



☞ If possible, set up two fields. This will provide plenty of opportunities for players to practice this situation.

☞ Have runners continue running to home if they can. This will create a tag play at home or, if the runner is coming back to the base, a tag play at third.

## COACH'S point



☞ Review the *overthrow* rule if necessary (see page 298).

## COACH'S point



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



## Team Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Respect

Gather team into groups of four. Have two players try to tag out a runner in a rundown; the fourth player is the umpire. Instruct the runner to run out of the base-line, if necessary, to avoid the tag. Play for one minute and rotate players so everyone gets a chance to be the umpire. "How did it feel to be the umpire?" Discuss responses and the importance of showing respect. "It can be difficult to be an umpire. It involves quite a few skills. Remember that it's a tough job, and always show respect for umpires."

### Wrap-Up

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

## Variations

- Work on the first base player's responsibilities if the runner takes off from second base. Typically the first base player backs up second base in a rundown of a runner between second and third.
- Have players who are ready practice hitting to specific areas of the field. Have them hit from a tee first, next from a machine (if possible), then from a live pitch.

### For fast-pitch

- Advanced players can work on slap hits during bunting practice.
- Continue to focus on leaving the base on the pitcher's release, because this will set up steal situations.
- Focus on coverage during a steal of second or third.

# Week 8

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Jog three times around the bases. Play catch with a partner.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Cardiorespiratory fitness

Gather team into a group. Have the players run for two minutes with a partner without stopping. "During our run I want you to be able to run for the whole two minutes. Who remembers what a talk test is?" Listen to their responses. "You can use a talk test to pace yourself so you don't run too fast and get too tired before the two minutes are up. Say the words 'single-double-triple-homer' to your partner. If you can say them without being out of breath, keep the same pace; if you're out of breath, slow down a little. Start running." Time for two minutes and gather team as a group. "Using a talk test helps you pace yourself. Pacing yourself when you run helps to improve your cardiorespiratory fitness."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

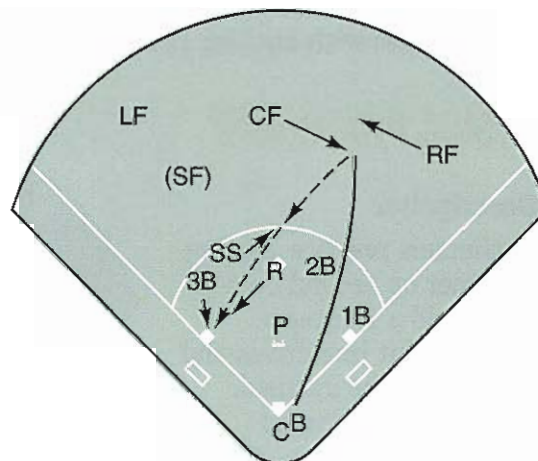
### "Tag"

#### 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 (for description of setup, see Game 3 in Week 1, page 191). The batting team always begins with a runner on second. If the runner gets to third base safely, the offense scores three points, and that runner does not continue running. The batter should hit or throw a fly ball into the outfield. A ball caught on the fly is an out, as is a runner thrown out at third base. The side is retired after nine points or three outs, whichever comes first.



## PURPOSE

To defend in the outfield by catching fly balls and returning them quickly to the infield to keep runners advancing from second or third base. The focus is on proper outfielding techniques (including quick release), good communication, and tagging up and advancing on fly balls.

## Equipment

- Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- Two 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.

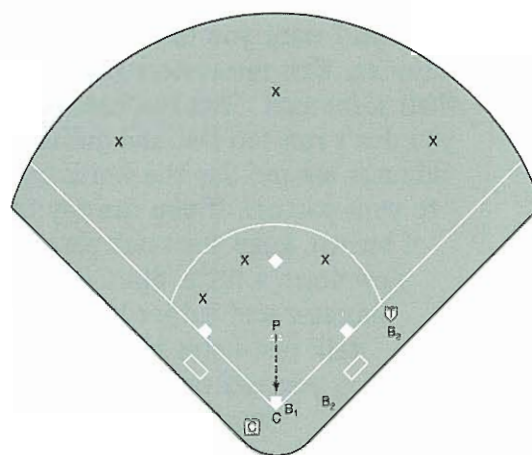
Coach: Where should you be looking after the ball is hit?  
 Players: At the third base coach.

## 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 that 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.



☞ Monitor pitchers carefully. Be sure that if they are throwing batting practice, they stay within the prescribed number of pitches. Be sure to include pitches thrown during game play.



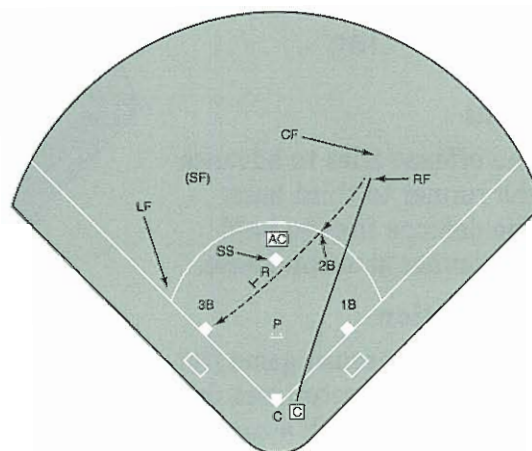
☞ Some players will be ready to learn how to time an approach to a fly ball so they can use their momentum to get the ball in faster. Encourage all outfielders to catch and throw quickly into the infield.

☞ Review tag play and tag up rule, if necessary (see pages 259 and 275, respectively).

### 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 8

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 direct the runner on second to attempt to score. This will set up relay or cutoff situations. Players should communicate about when the ball should be cut and what base to throw to.

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

### Description

Pitchers practice pitching. They should throw at *full* speed (after warming up adequately), focusing on form. Catchers should work 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. (The pitcher should not throw more than 50 pitches; have a coach, parent, or the catcher count. There's no limit for softball.)


## Game 2 (10 minutes)

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



 Review coverage during various situations.



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

## Team Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Caring

Choose two players to demonstrate. Tell them they will role-play a situation in which one player is fielding a grounder and throwing to the other. The ball goes over his or her head and the player receiving the ball gets upset and yells at the teammate. Have them act out the situation with your assistance. "How would you feel if someone yelled at you for a bad throw?" Listen to their responses. "How about if you made a bad throw but heard some encouraging words like 'It's okay. Maybe next time?'" Listen to their responses and discuss. "You show you respect your teammates by not yelling at them for a mistake and encouraging them to make a better play the next time they have a chance."

### Wrap-Up

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



## Variations

- Isolate specific situations and have players repeat them 2 or 3 times.
- 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. Emphasize quick catch, quick pivot, and quick (but accurate) release.
- Practice cutoffs and relays during a separate practice or identify specific situations to practice another time.

### For fast-pitch

- Include bunting practice during Skill Practice 1.
- Practice baserunning during bunting practice.
- Practice stealing and/or "faking" steals to draw throws from the catcher.

# Week 9

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Jog three times around the bases. Play catch with a partner.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Healthy habits

Gather players into two equal groups. "I want the first group to take one ball and play catch, making sure everyone gets one chance with the ball, then the last with the ball make a throw to the plate." After players finish, ask them to come over to the dugout or grassy area in the outfield. Have the second group go out and repeat the activity. "Following play like that, and after every time you come out of the game or during practice, what is one of the most important things you should do?" Listen to their responses. "Drink a little water during every break and especially when you need it. Drinking regularly prevents dehydration. It's important to drink water *before* you feel thirsty, especially on hot, humid days. Drinking plenty of water is a healthy habit to do every day."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

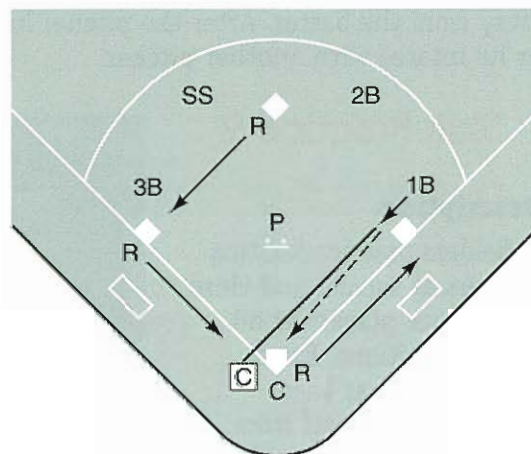
### "Throw or Go"

#### Goals

The offense tries to score.  
The defense tries to hold the runners on base and get the runner out at first base.

#### Description

Set up an infield (or two).  
Play a 6 v 6 game. The batting team begins with runners on second and third. If the runner at third base scores, the offense scores 4 runs. The side is retired after 12 runs or three outs, whichever comes first.



## PURPOSE

To defend at second and third base by holding runners to those bases on ground balls hit to the infield. The focus is on looking the runners back to the bases and making the play at first base. The baserunners lead off the bases to try to delay the throw.

## Equipment

- Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- Two 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 runners at second and third and get an out at first?

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

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

Players: Hold the runners at second and third base.

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

Players: Fake like you were running, but be ready to get back if the throw goes to the base you were on and to advance if the throw goes to first.

Coach: What did you do to get to third?

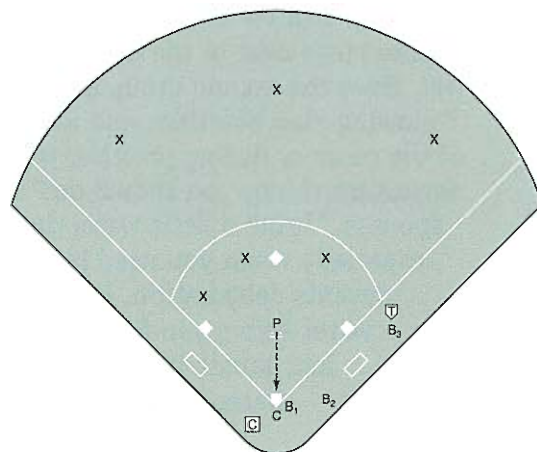
Players: Took off on the throw.

## Skill Practice (40 minutes)

### Skill Practice 1

#### Description

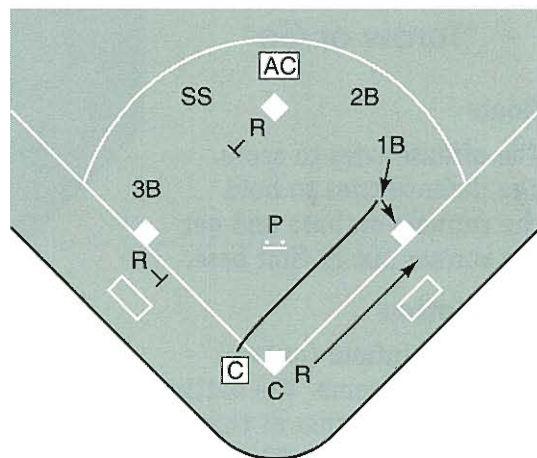
Players practice hitting. One of your pitchers throws for five batters, 10 pitches each. Players on deck should take practice swings, pretending that they are the hitter. The batter third in line should work on a batting tee. One player or coach gives feedback. The other players retrieve balls and roll 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

Infielders practice holding runners at second and third base. Place players at all infield positions. Extra players serve as base-runners, taking off from behind home plate and second and third base on your signal. A player or coach hits 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



# Week 9

position. Position a coach at second base to help with proper leadoff technique as well as proper positioning of the infielders.

## COACH'S cues



### 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 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

### Description

Pitchers practice pitching. They should throw *moderately fast* to *full* speed (after warming up adequately), focusing on form and accuracy. Catchers should work 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: Respect

Gather team into a group near three cones about 10 feet apart. "What are three things you can do or not do that show you respect your body?" Listen to their responses. Main ideas might be not taking drugs, keeping emotional outbursts under control (swearing, pushing an opponent), and not doing dangerous plays in practices and games. As players give responses, have them and others with the same idea stand next to a cone. "Those are all great ideas. When you practice those ideas, you show yourself and others that you respect your body."

### Wrap-Up

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

## Variations

- Isolate specific situations that the team may be having difficulty with.
- Runners can practice sliding and baserunning techniques as they participate in the drill. Assign a player, assistant coach, or parent to provide feedback and monitor performance.
- If the league allows leadoffs, stealing, and bunting, include these in Skill Practices.

### For fast-pitch

- Review coverage in specific situations.
- If players are ready, demonstrate and practice drawing throws to advance the runner.

# Week 10

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Jog three times around the bases. Play catch with a partner.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Healthy habits

Gather team into a group. "It's important to eat foods that give the most energy for playing. What are the four main nutrients or parts of food that help you grow and stay healthy?" Listen to responses. Discuss how carbohydrates (breads, cereals, and some fruits) give energy. Discuss how proteins (meats, nuts, and tofu) build muscle and bone. Mention that fats (fat and oils in meat, milk, and nuts) provide stored energy. Remind them that water (from the tap or in juice or milk) makes up 60 percent of their bodies. "One healthy habit you should be practicing every day is eating foods that keep your body healthy—that includes snacks. What are examples of each nutrient? Carbohydrates? Proteins? Fats? Water?"

Discuss food choices.

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

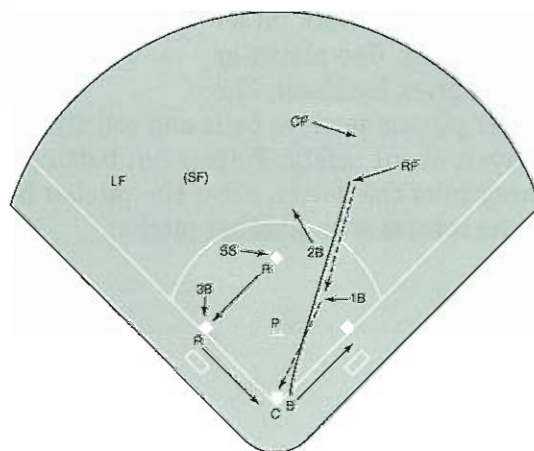
### "Tag"

#### Goals

The offense tries to advance the runners to third base and home. The defense tries to hold the runners at second and third.

#### Description

Play an intrasquad game (for description of setup, see page 191). The batting team always begins with runners on second and third base. If the runner on third scores, the offense scores 2 runs. If the runner on second scores, the offense scores 3 runs. If the runner on second only makes it to third, the offense sends another runner to second to begin



## PURPOSE

To throw out runners trying to tag up and advance from second or third base on fly balls to the outfield. The focus is on demonstrating proper outfielding techniques in fielding fly balls and returning them quickly to the infield, providing proper backups, and, for baserunners, tagging up and advancing.

## Equipment

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



- the next play. The batter should hit or throw a fly ball into the outfield.
- A ball caught on the fly is an out; outs also occur when the runner is
- thrown out at third base or home plate. The side is retired after 12 runs
- or three outs, whichever comes first.



Coach: What did you have to do to hold the runners at second and third?

Players: Catch the ball and throw it immediately to the cut off 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?

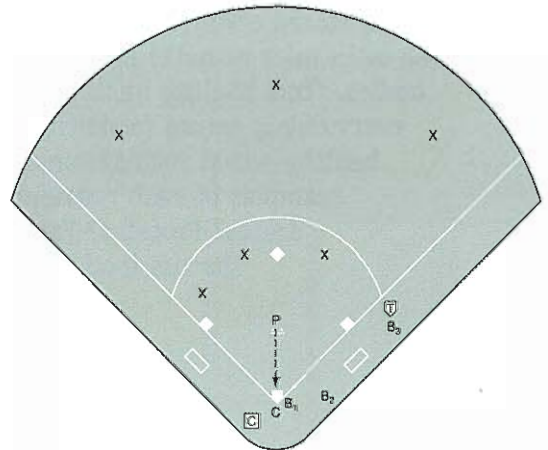
Players: At the third base coach.

## 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 that 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.



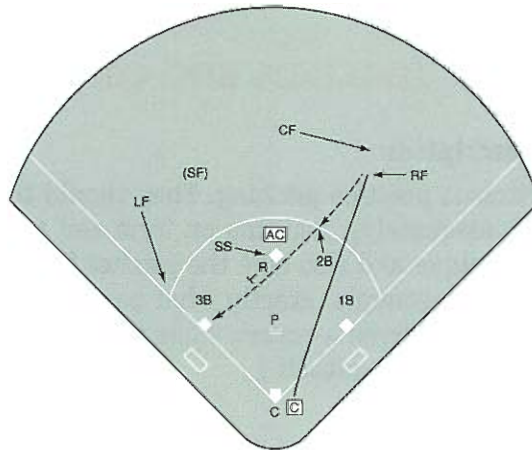
### Skill Practice 2

#### Description

Players practice holding a runner at second base. Field a full team, and place a runner at second base. A player or coach throws or hits line

# Week 10

drives and fly balls to the outfield. The runners take off as soon as a defender touches the ball. Fielders on the left side should throw to the third base player, and those on the right side should throw to the second base player, who cuts and holds the ball or throws to a base. Players rotate after three trials in any outfield position. Position a coach at second base to help with baserunning technique as well as with positioning of the middle infielders as they anticipate a possible tag play or cutoff.



## COACH'S cues



### For tagging up

"Watch the coach!"  
"Go on the signal!"

## Skill Practice 3

### Description

Players practice cutoffs and relay throws. Repeat Skill Practice 2, except an additional runner should take off from home and run to first on a thrown or batted ball, and the runners on second and third should attempt to advance to home plate. Runners should not leave until the outfielder touches the ball. This will set up relay situations. Also work on communication. Players must communicate about when the ball should be cut and what base to throw to.

## COACH'S cues



### For the catcher on a tag play at the plate

"Position between plate and the runner!"  
"Get low, wide, and stable!"  
"Watch the ball into the glove!"  
"Catch firmly!"  
"Tag low!"

## COACH'S point

Emphasize communication and review rules related to tag situations and procedures for watching coaches.

## COACH'S point

If a player is not directly involved in a play, he or she should be backing up or communicating with other

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

### Description

Pitchers practice pitching. They should throw *full speed* (after warming up adequately), focusing on form and accuracy. Catchers should work 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. Have someone count pitches; don't exceed 50. (No limit for softball.)

## 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 team into a circle. "I want everyone to count how many players we have in the circle." Wait while they count. "How many do you get, total?" Listen to their responses. "Well, that's good counting, but you know, the real total is *one*. That's right. We're one team with many contributions from each player. Remember there is no 'I' in team. If we don't play together as one, we will not play our best. To play together we all have individual responsibilities to the team like working hard at bat and on the field, following rules, and getting good at covering your position. Making sure each one of you takes that responsibility seriously is an important attitude to practice."

### Wrap-Up

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

## Variations

Isolate specific situations and have players repeat them 2 or 3 times.

### For fast-pitch

Focus on coverage during specific situations.



# Week 11

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Jog three times around the bases. Play catch with a partner.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Healthy habits

Gather team into a group. "Tell me some healthy habits you practice every day." Responses may be brushing teeth, eating foods that help you grow, getting enough sleep. If taking drugs or using alcohol is not one, discuss this. If it was a response, lead discussion from the response. "You have been hearing 'say no to drugs' probably since you have been very young. Let's talk about what it really means and if/where you might have to use that phrase. What are some situations where you think you might have to say no to drugs?" Discuss their responses (in school, from other kids you don't know very well, at parties, etc.). "It's an important healthy habit to stay away from drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. Successful players never use this stuff."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

### "Intrasquad"

#### Goals

Perform the proper backups in various situations.

#### Description

Play 7 v 7 or have three teams of 5 players each, with 9 or 10 players in the field and 5 at bat.

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 backup?

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 by demonstrating proper positioning during backups in various situations.

## Equipment

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



## Skill Practice (30 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 238 for a diagram).

### 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 point**

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

☞ Use "instant replays" to demonstrate proper backup positions.

**COACH'S cues**



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

**COACH'S point**

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

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

#### Description

Pitchers practice pitching. They should throw at *moderate* speed, then increase to *full* speed during the last half of pitching practice, focusing on form and accuracy. Catchers should work 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.

# Week 11

## Game 2 (20 minutes)

Play an intrasquad game or scrimmage with another team.

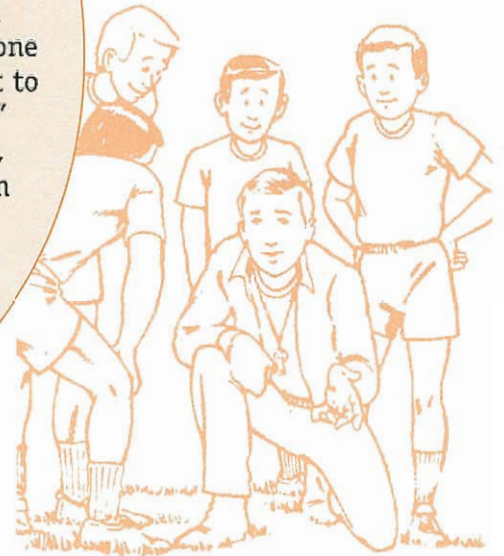
### Team Circle (5 minutes)

#### Key Idea: Caring

Gather team into a group and choose three players to demonstrate. Have the three stand in a line. The two outside players should carefully lift the middle player. Have them problem-solve to find a way to hold the player up. Continue for about 30 seconds and then have them set the player down. "Did you see how Karl was supported by his teammates? Ben and Tyrone showed you how to give physical support, but it's also important to support your teammates emotionally. What are some examples?" Listen to responses (positive comments, identifying good plays, encouraging comments during losses) and discuss them. "When you support your teammates throughout the season, you show you care about them. You'll play better as a team when you show you care about each other."

#### 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 12

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Jog three times around the bases. Play catch with a partner.

### PURPOSE

To defend in the infield and outfield in various situations and to 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)
- Two batting tees
- Five balls per tee
- One glove per player
- One ball per player (minimum)

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Reversibility principle

Gather team into a group. "What happens to your body if you do not stay active and keep training and conditioning your body?" Listen to their responses. Discuss losing conditioning when you stop being active. "What is that called? Right—the 'reversibility principle.' What should you do to prevent losing your conditioning? Participating in physical activity or another sport after the season will prevent you from reversing your conditioning. How will you stay active after the season is over?" Listen to their responses. "Remember the 'reversibility principle'—you use it or lose it! You worked hard all season to improve your fitness, so keep it up for next year!"

## 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 191).



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.)

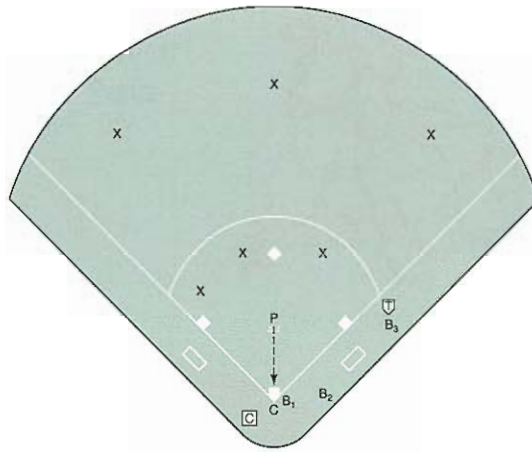
# Week 12

## Skill Practice (30 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 that 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)

#### Description

Pitchers practice pitching. They should throw at *moderate* speed, then increase to *full* speed during the last half of pitching practice, focusing on form and accuracy. Catchers should work 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 the outside corner. Limit the number of pitches to 50.

### Game 2 (20 minutes)

Play an intrasquad game or scrimmage with another team.



👉 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 two other Skill Practices, then complete Skill Practice 3.



## COACH'S cues



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

## Team Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Respect

Gather team into a group near two cones about 10 feet apart. Choose two players to demonstrate. "Let's say you just hit a home run, Jack. Show everyone a way to celebrate or congratulate your teammates that won't make the other team upset. Now, Kyle, show the team how you would celebrate if you wanted everyone to know how happy you were and that you thought you played much better than your opponents. If you think the best way to celebrate is like Jack, stand at this cone. If you think Kyle's is the better way, stand at this cone. . . . It's important to respect your opponents during games. You can do that by saying 'good play' or slapping hands calmly with your team. Now think about respected athletes—what do they do before, during, and after games?" Discuss.

### Wrap-Up

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



## Variations

- Have each team elect a captain or two to design drills and run practice.
- Have players with good bat control work on placing the ball around the field and hitting behind the runner, when appropriate.