

# Baseball Drills

Soft hands baseball drill ~ Plain and simple.

Bare-handed, players roll a ball back and forth slowly on a roll and field the ball in front of them. They bring the ball up into their bodies and ready themselves to throw. (I explain that as a receiver catching a ball in a drill, you don't just stop, you turn upfield and run) 20-30 reps, 20 -30 backhands, and then throw on a glove and do it again!

From Rich...

Hit a grounder or line drive at an infielder and have fielder make the throw to the catcher. Your catcher tosses out a short bunt in front of the plate so that the infielder has to keep charging.

As soon as the infielder fields the bunt and tosses it to the catcher, throw (or hit) a pop fly back out so the infielder has to catch it over his or her shoulder or head.

Here's a great baseball drill that combines fielding fly balls from left field, hitting the relay, base running, tagging up and tagging out a runner at home.

You'll need a left fielder, third baseman, catcher and runner. The runner starts out on third base.

A coach hits a fly ball to left field, the runner has to tag up and try to beat the throw to the plate. The left fielder has to catch the ball and hit the relay for a throw home to tag the runner.

It teaches the runner to tag up on fly balls and go when the coach says GO. It teaches the outfielder to set up his catch for a good throw to the relay. It teaches the relay man how far out he should go and to turn glove side to make the throw home and lastly, it teaches the catcher how to setup at the plate for a tag.

Hope this one helps one of the coaches out there. It's done wonders for our team getting the ball in quickly from all outfield positions.

## **Drill:** Pitch Trajectory

### **Purpose:**

Develop baserunners ability to read the trajectory of the pitch to determine if it will hit the dirt. Allow the defense to work on defense in the same situations.

### **Equipment:**

Baseballs, catchers in gear, batting helmets

### **Setup:**

Have a complete infield including a couple of catchers in gear. Coach will pitch. Have the rest of the team with helmets on to run the bases. You don't need a hitter.

### **Execution:**

Vary the situation by changing how many runners on base. Start with a runner on first, then first and second, first and third, finally bases loaded.

Coach will throw pitches to the catcher. Every few pitches he will throw one in the dirt.

Each runner should be watching the delivery of the pitch and try to read the trajectory to determine if the pitch will be in the dirt. If the runners read that the ball will be in the dirt, he should be more aggressive taking his secondary lead anticipating that he can advance to the next base on a passed or blocked ball.

With a runner on first only, have the runners steal when they determine the ball will be in the dirt. If they read it correctly, it should be an easy steal even if the ball is blocked and/or caught on the bounce by the catcher.

When on 2nd and 3rd the runners will be aggressive in taking the secondary lead and determine if they should go or stay. The goal is for runners to get used to reading the pitch and avoiding the hesitation that often happens when a pitch bounces in the dirt.

Defensively this drill gives catchers practice at blocking pitches in the dirt with game situations. Encourage the catchers to throw the ball when runners get too far off. This is a chance for them to learn when to throw the ball and when to run someone back. It also benefits the runners as they learn how far they can get off and how to get back quickly.

I have a baseball drill that kills two birds with one stone.

Take three balls put them half way down the third base line about three feet away from each other all in a row from the foul line towards the pitching circle.

Take two fielders and one baserunner. One fielder waits on second and the other fielder waits on third next to the base. When you say go, the baserunner runs to second while the third baseman runs down the line to throw all three balls one by one as fast as he can to second before the base runner runs past second base.

This teaches the runner to corner first base well, makes them run at top speed, and the third baseman realizes once he throws the ball he still has something to do besides watching his throw. The second baseman learns how to receive balls from another fielder. The fielders have to complete all the throws and beat the runner to win.

One of the baseball drills we do is called 21 outs. We do this drill with our regular season teams and our ALL-STAR teams and they love it.

You start out with every one playing in their starting position. Start by hitting to the left fielder. If you hit a pop up that's one out; if you hit a grounder, the fielder has to hit the cutoff man and then he has to make a good throw to 2nd base. If he does, then that's an out. If not, you start back at 0 with your outs.

In the infield we start out throwing to 1st base. After every one has done that we try to turn a double play. As we do the drill the kids will call out the number of the out, and when they mess up you will here the number 0 a lot but don't worry, after a while the drill starts clicking and goes very smoothly.

The kids love this drill. We have actually went to 60 with our outs.

This is a simple baseball drill that we do to keep the batters aware of the importance of putting the ball in play on a squeeze play call.

We place a player on 3rd base and a batter in the batter's box. We intentionally throw a variety of high, low, inside, and outside pitches to the batter to get them used to bunting bad pitches.

We have the third base-runner complete the play also to simulate all of the action taking place on the field that can be a distraction to the batter.

My kids (8 and 9 year olds) were having a hard time with fly balls. I will share the baseball drill I used to help with this deficiency.

For fly balls I noticed that my kids were afraid of the ball. On the few occasions they were getting their gloves on the ball, they were not using two hands and the ball would pop out. I'm sure that this is not an uncommon problem. I would like to say that I came up with this idea but it was given to me by a friend.

I took a tennis racket and hit fly balls to the kids with tennis balls. They were not afraid of the tennis balls so they got in the proper position to make the play. They soon found out they could glove a fly ball. But they then found out that the bouncy tennis ball would pop out if they did not use two hands.

Ta da!!! My boys now are much better at catching fly balls.

Here is one of our coaches and players' favorite baseball drills, use it with softball or baseball. I call it the 7-minute drill.

Break your team into 3 groups. One group hits and the other 2 groups are in the field. Only nine players on defense at a time. I have a coach as a pitcher with all other positions filled by players.

For seven minutes each team hits. After 3 outs we clear the bases, but don't switch teams until the seven minutes are up. The hitting team scores 1 point for each base the batter/runner and runners reach. It is a full "go" scrimmage situation. Coaches can stop the clock to cover the game situations that naturally occur or that need to be reviewed or they can wait until the 21 minute session is over.

The beauty of the drill is

1. All kinds of game situations come up;
2. After 7 minutes of hitting and base runners your players tongues will be dragging;
3. It is highly competitive so it simulates real time and games;
4. Players enjoy the drill.

We usually run this drill at the end of practice, with the winning team not having to put the field to rest or put away equipment.

It's called "Iron Man".

Divide the team into two lines - one at SS one at 2nd base. I hit hard grounders to SS and then to 2nd base. Each must field the ball cleanly and make a clean throw to first base. If they do, they go to the end of the line and get another turn.. If they don't field the ball cleanly or make a bad throw, they are out.

The last man standing is "The Iron Man".

Use a large rubbermaid outdoor garbage can, tipped over at home plate facing center field.

Place the players in a line in center field, and have them throw the ball home (one at a time) trying to throw the ball into the garbage can.

End the practice with this drill, and have a reward (candy, soda, gum, etc) for the player (if any) that makes it in the garbage can.

You can decide how many times to go through the line.

First thing is that I do this in my every practice warm up. I put all my boys in a circle and I stand in the middle so all I have to do is turn around to see every boy.

Now this drill is for general hand and glove coordination. I stand in the middle with 2 Balls and my own glove and proceed to turn around and throw randomly grounders, line drives, and pop flies. The boys then have to field or catch the throw and then quickly make a good accurate throw back to me.

I make this more difficult by increasing the speed of my throws and randomness. To the point of making a type of game out of it we continue the drill until every boy has successfully completed a good catch and return throw without dropping the ball or throwing wildly.

Since the start of this season when first started to use this system my boys increasingly improved their ball handling every practice.

From John...

A baseball drill I do is one that allows pitchers to work on their pickoff moves, baserunners work on reading the pickoff moves and fielders to work on covering their base on a pickoff.

Here is how it goes:

1. Add another pitching rubber about 5' on each side of the existing pitching rubber on the infield.
2. Put a runner at 1st, 2nd and 3rd, along with a fielder covering that base.
3. Have the pitcher nearest 1st base working on pickoffs going to that base, with the baserunner working on his leadoff and getting back when the pitcher throws over to first, and the baserunner getting a good jump when the pitcher goes home.

The pitcher in the middle works to 2nd base and the pitcher closest to 3rd works that base.

After 10 minutes or so the pitcher rotates to a different rubber as do the baserunners.

This baseball drill works great for all ages.

Tennis Ball Drill.

Take a tennis racket and tennis balls. Coach hits balls into air. Fielder must track ball and catch with two hands.

This drill makes fielder squeeze glove and use two hands. Ball will pop out of glove if two hands are not used. Also if ball is missed it will not hurt fielder.

One baseball drill is called “Monkey in the Middle” -

I’m sure many baseball coaches know about this drill, but you put a player between coaches and each coach hits a ground ball and the fielder scoops it up and throws it to a catcher. Following their throw they turn directly 180 degrees and field another grounder that is coming from a coach behind them. You can make the drill go faster and faster until it’s almost as if a regular grounder in a game doesn’t seem so hard to field anymore.

One last one is called “Survivor”. Each athlete can get in groups of two and then they can have any type of contest. You can have the first group to throw to 20 or the first group who has 20 one-hops to each other. When the first group reaches the expected number of throws they then throw their hands up in the air or sit down. That group may then vote off another group that cannot do the drill again. This generally causes the group to vote off someone of great competition so they don’t have them as contenders. You can decrease the number to 10 quick throws and another group gets voted off the island until it comes down to the two last remaining groups.

These are some fun ideas that I like to use for coaching my high school group. You may use them at any level. The coaches who told me these were college top ten contenders.

From Tom...

I’m happy to share a drill I came up with to get the whole team involved with fielding, throwing and catching in the infield while I give my catchers work on throwing down to 2B.

By the way, I frequently remind my players that the most common errors are fielding and throwing, and that it’s vital to success that we make the routine plays “routinely”.

You really need two catchers and eight infielders to run this drill. Everyone will rotate and the catchers will take turns throwing down to 2B.

I place a coach on the mound to start the drill with an overhand pitch. I place two players at every other position on the infield.

I start the drill with a pitch to home. The “first” catcher squats behind the plate to receive the pitch and make a throw to the SS at 2B. (For now, the second baseman just learns to position herself to back up the SS.) The SS makes a catch & tag, and then with good footwork makes a strong throw to 3B. The third baseman makes a catch & tag and throws home to the “second” catcher. He hands the ball to a coach at home who hits a grounder to 3B. The third baseman fields and makes a throw to 1B.

The first baseman returns the ball to the coach on the mound and the drill starts over again - beginning with the “second” catcher. All infielders rotate counter-clockwise after each turn - 2B moves to the SS position after backing up the throw to 2B, SS follows the throw to 3B, 3B follows his throw to 1B after fielding the ground ball, and 1B moves to 2B after the catch. By the way, I don’t allow SS or 2B to move until the ball hits the catcher’s glove - they must sprint to their spots. If the throw from home gets by the SS, I expect the second baseman to make the stop and throw to 3B. The second player in line at 1B & 3B should be prepared to back-up bad throws and keep the drill moving.

It’s fun to watch once they learn the drill and get in rhythm, (which might take a few practices with a young team).

#### VARIATION:

1) The second baseman cuts the throw from the catcher at a spot halfway between the mound and 2B and makes a quick throw to 3B on the run. (SS still goes to 2B as before to back up the throw) The drill continues as above.

I call this Up-Backs. It is done with outfielders.

The player starts facing the coach, a few feet in front of them. Send the player back (dropstepping) to their glove side and throw a ball well over their head so that they work on going back on the ball. As soon as they catch or miss the first ball, you will throw another well in front of them so they will come forward hard. Hopefully they will catch both but I have had great success with my players because it creates a challenge for them. The kids really get into it and give a good effort while producing some conditioning and some flyball work.

You can decide on what to do with the first ball once they catch it so they can still use two hands coming forward if possible: I get them to toss it to the player who went in front of them (coming back to the line). After a few times of this, they will be winded.

I got this baseball drill from one of my buddies who played in the Dodgers organization.

**From Roger...**

I have a player stand in between two cones about ten feet apart. The player breaks down and I roll a ball towards the player off to one side and the player has to slide over and get in front of the ball. The player must then get the ball back to the coach. As the ball gets to the player I throw a second ball to the other side of the player and they have to slide over in front of this ball and pop up and make a good throw back to the coach.

One of the most common plays that lead to errors in minor league baseball is hitting the cut off man when a ball is hit to the opposite field and a player is tagging up on either second or third base.

**What you need (set up):** You should have a second baseman, shortstop and a third baseman in the infield, along with a right fielder. A base runner will occupy second base during this drill.

**How the drill works:** At first, the coach can simply give the ball to the right fielder and then signal for the play to begin. This takes the element of trying to focus on catching the ball out of the equation until the player understands the concept of hitting the cut off man.

The right fielder should be playing the ball to the cut off man (second baseman) and then the second baseman to the third baseman to try to get the tag out.

This baseball infield drill can also be run with a left fielder and a base runner on third base. Then the drill would be from the left field to the shortstop and then to home plate. Further, you can add the extra element of catching the ball once the players understand the importance of hitting the cut off man.

A common situation in baseball is the run down. A player caught in between two bases – either one of them being safe. Executing a proper defensive set up is important to getting the out. Pickle is a classic baseball practice drill you can add to your workouts.

**What you need (set up):** Set up a number of stations that is divisible by three. You will need three people per station (2 fielders, 1 runner).

All distance between bases is 30 feet (in all directions)

**How this drill works:** The fielders need to work the ball back and forth in an attempt to get the runner out. The runner needs to try to advance to third base or get back safely to second. You can award the fielders two points if they get the runner out. One point if they get the runner back to second, zero points if the runner gets to third base. Play the game until the fielders get 5 points. Rotate the players at this point.

**Result:** Both the runners and the fielders will understand what they need to do when they are in this situation – both on offense and defense. Rundowns occur often in Little League ball, and even in high school league with regularity. It is good for young players to know how to get the out.

**Note:** Once the players have mastered this aspect of the drill, then you should advance it to the standard tactic where players are backing each other up and rotating as the rundown advances.