

Team Warm-up Routine

THE PURPOSE

- To get everyone warm, loose and ready to play.
- To reduce the injury risk from pulls and strains in cold muscles
- To get...
 - the blood pumping
 - the circulation system peaking
 - and the brain in gear.
- To bring the team together as a unit

THE APPROACH

Bring everyone together in a circle, away from fans, friends, and other distractions. We prefer the outfield but at times it can work better to be outside the fence line.

Once players know the routine, coaches should let them run it themselves. One person takes the center of the circle, the leader's spot. Usually that's the starting catcher (the team's field captain). An added advantage of leaving the players alone to do this (coaches walk away), is that they can kibbitz and talk about whatever interests them. The bonding helps them gel as a unit and helps them realize that they are ultimately responsible for their own success as a team.

STEP 1: THE CORE

The routine should start with core work and then extend to the extremities. Repeat each move at least 3-5 times: each rep should produce greater extension.

- Trunk bends (toe touches - hold, don't bounce),
- Laterals (side pulls, with an arm raised over the head - to full extension)
- Trunk rotations (hold at maximum twist, don't bounce)
- Optional: jumping jacks (for heart and lungs, circulation)

STEP 2: LEGS

Do everything with toes in line and turned out as well - works different leg muscles.

- Leg lifts (knees up to tummy)
- Lunge stretches (like a long stride, and also side to side)
- Squats (slower is better, no bouncing up and down)
- Also ankle bends (but not twists - toes point out then pull up).
- Optional: Prone work (lie on ground), which can include figure fours, pull backs, etc.

STEP 3: UPPER BODY

We assume some general throwing work has been done already. (In truth it would be better if the stretching happened first, but arriving and throwing is a comfortable part of the ritual before the entire team is on the field together.)

Again, as with leg work, it's important to repeat the exercises with palms up and also palms down which works the muscles differently. Also, we try to focus on stretches in only one direction at time, focusing on elongating the muscles, avoiding moves which twist them.

- Arm swings (to front then back for delts and pecs - both palm up and palm down)
- Lateral arm lifts (out from body, for shoulders) - both palm up and palm down)
- Note: We don't suggest shoulder circles, but if they are done, then slowly, and in both clockwise and counterclockwise rotations.

- Arm crosses (arms out to sides and back - scapular loading - then crossing over chest)
- Arm curls (again, both palm up and palm down, and to full extension/flexion of biceps and triceps)
- Wrist curls (also palm up and palm down, but no circles)

STEP 4: THE NECK

We separated this from upper body only to emphasize one point - do not do neck circles. Have players do nods (front and back) and shoulder shrugs (neck to side), but no rotational moves.

STEP 5: SPRINTS

To wrap up our circle and move on to the next phase of our pre-game ritual - we do a sprint jog...

The team forms a line behind the exercise leader (catcher) and starts a jog around the field. However, a jog is mostly aerobic and does very little for the anaerobic, sudden burst, energy systems needed in baseball. So we add a sprint component. On a 'go' shout from the catcher, the last player in line sprints to the front of the line. As soon as he arrives, 'go' is called again and the player now last in line sprints to the front, and so on.

We find that with a team of 12 - 14 players, the sprint each player runs is equal to the length of a base-to-base run. Also the entire team can get in their sprints within one lap of the outfield. The sprint run ends with a burst of speed by everyone back to the starting point (or the bench).

The only disadvantage to the sprint jog is that it doesn't do as much as a series of wind sprints would do. Some teams prefer to line up everyone on the foul line and have them do a series of sprints into the field in line with second base. (Walk back to the line and sprint again, etc.)