

Coaching Clinic Packet:

Presented By: Todd Coburn, Chris Murphy, Nate Trosky, Taylor Cole & John Novak

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

These questions need to be answered prior to your season beginning:

1. Why are you coaching?
 - Answer: This is specific to you. Is it because your son is playing, you want to help out a friend, or is it for the “Love of the Game?” It must be understood that as much as we all want to win, it should not be the driving force behind why you are coaching. Baseball is a game of failure, which you and your players need to understand. It is always more fun if you win; it is ok if you lose though, as long as there is something to learn from the failure (which there always is).

2. What is your role as a coach?
 - Answer: It is important to understand that for youth baseball players, you are much more than a coach. For some children, you will be a father/mother figure, a teacher, a mediator, a psychologist, a friend and quite possibly one of the most influential people in your player’s lives. Often times you make more of an impact than you know on your players.

3. What are your goals for yourself and the team?
 - Answer: This should be clearly defined by you for the parents and the team. A good motto to go by is “Let’s have fun and maybe learn a little bit along the way!” Goals should not revolve around wins and losses. Having each child become a better baseball player is a more realistic and appropriate goal.

4. What is the difference between coaching & teaching?
 - Answer: Coaching is what is done during a game (setting a line up, setting a pitching rotation, calling a hit and run or bunt, putting on a pick off play or giving a post game “pep talk,” etc.) Teaching is what is done during practice (how to field a ground ball, how to catch a fly ball, how to hit an off-speed pitch, how to throw a change up, etc.). Be careful not to “over coach,” or teach during games. This will only lead to frustration for you and your players. It is important to understand that practice time is YOUR time while game time is the PLAYERS time.

10 TEACHING TIPS The following are concepts that will help your players better understand what you are teaching them:

1. Tell your players what you want them to do, not what you “Don’t” want them to do. (Example: Use the phrase “Stay closed so you stop dropping your barrel,” instead of “Don’t drop your barrel when you swing, you’re going under the ball.”)
2. Encourage your players to focus on what they “want to do,” not on what they “don’t want to do.” Example: Your players final pre pitch thought should not be “Don’t strike out; I hope I don’t strike out.” Tell them instead to say in their heads, “See the ball and hit it,” or “keep your head down.”
3. Never tell your players “good job” if they are still doing something incorrectly. A more appropriate statement would be “You’re doing better, you’re still not quite correct though,” or “Good adjustment, you are still doing “this” though.” “You’ve got the right idea and I like the way you’re thinking, you’re still not correct though,” and this is why....Saying “good job” when they are performing something incorrectly will only confuse them when the next time they perform the skill incorrectly you say “wrong, you need to do it this way.”
4. You must instill confidence in your players. They will feed off of your actions and behavior. If you slap your leg, throw your hat or yell at them every time something goes wrong they will develop a fear of failure and their confidence will be negatively affected.
5. There are 3 ways children learn. There are visual learners (they watch something and imitate what they see), audible learners (tell them what to do and they can do it) and kinesthetic learners (you move or position their body in the correct fashion and they repeat it). With that said, you must utilize all three styles in order to help your players. Not all of your players will learn from a same style of teaching.
6. Use demonstrations often. If you cannot demonstrate a skill properly, use a player on your team that can, or bring in a guest coach that can. Although there are players that can learn by you simply telling them what to do, most need to see it done correctly to be successful.
7. Variability of practice is paramount. You should be throwing fastballs and change ups during batting practice, rolling forehands and backhands at varying speeds for infield, hitting fly balls and ground balls to your outfielders, etc. The key is to make practice as game like as possible.
8. Break skills down into parts to teach them (whole – part – whole philosophy). Have your players take warm up swings to get loose (put it all together), then break the swing down by focusing on a specific part of the swing (the load, the launch, contact position, lower half, finish, etc.). Then end with putting it all together again. Once they get all of the “parts” figured out, they will better understand the “whole” swing.
9. Learn how to say the same thing in several different ways. For example, when teaching the importance of the hand path during the swing you may tell one player that they need to

“keep their hands inside the baseball,” another that their “hands need to beat the barrel in the race,” and still another that they need to “stick the knob of the bat into the imaginary dart board.” Each player’s mind works differently and it may take you saying something three different ways to get a player to understand what you are telling them to do.

10. Never allow your players to have negative “self talk.” Young, inexperienced players have a tendency to say things like “I suck at hitting curve balls,” or, “I can’t hit this guy because he throws too hard,” or maybe “I’m not good at throwing change ups.” If you allow them to say this enough times, they will start to believe it and their chances of ever being successful at whatever they are feeling negative about goes way down. Never allow your players to get a case of the “I can’t’s.”

10 WINNING CONCEPTS

1. **Build confidence all day long** - This game revolves around confidence.

- Most of the time it's a confidence issue when players fail. Every success should be highlighted and failure learned from. "If you think you can, you're right, if you think you can't, you're still right"

2. **Be specific when teaching** - General feedback such as "great job or "nice play" is acceptable when used at the appropriate time.

- When giving directions or teaching cues though, you need to be as specific as possible. Examples: "Wait on the ball," "Swing later!" or "Get the ball down!" are too general. "Let ball get to your feet" or "Release the ball out in front of your hat" are more specific and are often better understood.

- You need to also learn to say the same thing in several different ways. What is understood by one player may not be understood by all of your players.

3. **Be aggressive** - Put pressure on other team (Hard turns, aggressive at the plate, etc.).

- Try not to have hitters always work from behind in the count by taking too many pitches and go over base running to teach your team the importance of "aggressive" base running and what it means to be aggressive.

4. **End with a positive** - When conducting your post practice and post game talks, start with items they need to work on individually or as a team, then have your "final thought" be the good stuff, the "what they did well" and acknowledging the "player of the game" or who performed well that game.

- That ending item is what they take home.

5. **Think whole team, instead of top of line up** - Think about the future of these kids, the bottom half of a teams line up wins championships anyway. You shouldn't always bat little Timmy last and big Bobby fourth.

- Confidence built or lost on the baseball field can translate into life. If Timmy thinks he bats ninth and plays right field every game because he's "no good," he may start to believe he's not any good in other areas of his life and lose his self confidence and develop a low self esteem.

6. **Parents** - Expect that "one" parent each year, it always happens and always will. Just listen and move on, let them know what is important to you and make sure you explain what your expectations are at the beginning of the season so everyone is "on the same page."

7. **Team Unity** - This is where the teams become championship teams. Having pizza parties and doing things together as a team are a must. Hold as many events as possible.

8. Be remembered as a coach - Have your players leave each day or each season saying, "that coach was cool," "I learned a bunch and had fun." We all remember our good coaches, not always for instruction, but as people and people that believed in us as players.

9. Dads and their sons - Once your child and/or players hit 10 to 12 years old, maybe sooner; they don't think you know anything anymore. This is the way of life and that's the way it's going to be.

- Bring in guest coaches and get them into camps and clinics to get them around other good coaches who can reinforce what you're teaching them.

10. Have fun and enjoy the experience - Do your best not to get caught up in "winning at all cost." Yes your players need to learn the meaning of success and failure or what the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat involve.

- They need to understand though that failure happens to everyone and they need to learn from their failures in order to grow. "Fail early, fail often and fail forward."

PRE SEASON ORGANIZATION TIPS

Once your team is selected, email or phone the players and parents to establish a team/parent meeting to explain goals and expectations.

- Let them know what is important to you, and what you expect from them.
- Also let them know about yourself, your background and you personally.
- Are you an “on time” guy, are you a “parents are parents and I’ll be the coach guy.” -
- These are all important pieces to the communication “puzzle.” Additionally, form a team list with contact information to give out to all parents.
- Form a team practice schedule as soon as possible. The more your team is together the better (team functions like parties and barbeques).
- Finally, remember...the first impression is everything.

IMPORTANT NOTE: “Team Mom’s and / or Team Dad’s” are the best, you should use them often. (They are great for goodie bags or post game treats

• If possible, try to have three volunteer coaches per practice plus yourself (Sometimes it might only be you and a helper) • 3 to 4 Batting Tees • Bucket of Baseballs • Bucket of Tennis Balls • Bucket of wiffle balls • Helmets (usually provided by league) • 1 or 2 Sets Catchers Gear • **Possible pop up net or nets**

FUN & EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Practice Setup: The goal for any practice is to make sure that there is never any player on the team with nothing to do.

Although it is important to try and stick to the practice plan as close as possible, quick modifications and adjustments are sometimes necessary to keep it fun.

When you only have the field for a short period of time, you need to keep all players as active as possible for the entire practice.

You may need to get creative depending on the equipment you have and/or the number of kids at practice. Talking to your players during practice: When you are lecturing the players, make sure that they are not looking directly into the sun. The instructor should be the one looking in the direction of the sun or simply make sure it is off to the side. The coach needs to keep the attention of the players. It doesn't take long for young kids to lose focus and a lot of times after about 3-5 minutes; you will "lose" some of them.

Signs that you have "lost them" are: wandering eyes, **talking to their neighbor**, and/or **playing in the grass or dirt**.

That is when you can:

- Pull a player up to be an example
- Start asking questions, but have them raise their hands
- Start your next sentence off with the name of the player you notice is not listening ("So Timmy, when you're working on this next drill, I want you to.....")
- Tell a story
- Show an example or give a demonstration
- Get them involved, do shadow drills or have them all try together

Practice Components: Deciding on what to include in your practice plan on a particular day is as simple as selecting items off of a menu at a restaurant. You need to choose an appetizer (What you will do for a warm-up), what type of soup or salad do you want for your first course (what you will do for your position specific or skill specific drills), what do you want for the main course (the "meat & potatoes" of a practice or what you will do for your team drills), and what you want for dessert (what you will do for a game and/or competition). Organization and implementation of a fun and effective practice:

Step #1 – Select a goal or focus for each practice.

This should be done before practice begins. Many times you may have only one focus for a particular practice or you may do mostly team drills one day, or you may play all games and have competitions one day.

The key is to have this set before you get to the field and determine what will be the most beneficial content for your team at that time.

Step #2 – Select a warm up.

Make sure to do something new almost every practice (unless they request a specific one because they have so much fun doing it). *See "menu" items below for examples.

Step #3 – Select a couple position / skill drills.

Make sure to vary your practice plan by selecting different skills to work on each practice.

Example: One practice work on pitching & catching along with hitting, a team drill and game, another practice work on infield & outfield along with hitting, a team drill and a game.

Step #4 – Select a Team Drill(s).

Make sure to vary your practice plan by selecting different team drills to work on each practice.

There are a lot of different ways to accomplish the same goal. An example being you don't have to always do regular infield/outfield to work on fielding and throwing (substitutions being the triangle drill or four corner drill).

Step #5 – (IF TIME) Select a Game or Competition.

It is a good idea to end at least one practice a week with a fun activity or competition so your players leave the field understanding that the game of baseball is

Step #6 - just that, a game, and it is fun.

It is also a good idea to have a treat at the field (great to delegate to team moms or dads) or go somewhere as a team to get a treat after all practices and games.

Note: Other than making sure the warm up is done first, there is no specific order you have to conduct your practice.

One day do warm up then go into games and competitions then drills and finish with another game or maybe do a warm up, then a scrimmage, then a contest or fun game.

Variation of content and order will keep it fun for the players.

How much time should I dedicate to each component of a practice drill station? 5% - Introduction of station (Goal of station, responsibilities, etc.) 15% - Demonstration(s) (use kids as demonstrators whenever possible) 45% - Major activity for station (kids are actually performing drill/ skill) 8% - Giving feedback (What you are seeing, what you want to see) 25% - Games or Contests with players 2% - Review, collecting gear/items and prepare group to rotate

Step #7 - Use your knowledge to then select and do General Mobility exercises immediately after | 5-7 minutes total.

Step #8 - PITCHING FUNDAMENTALS & DRILLS

Teaching Points: Remind your pitchers that “pitching” is just “fancy throwing.”

- Young pitchers tend to “freak out” when pitching in a game while performing well in the bull pen and playing catch. Explain to them that they are simply playing catch with their catcher. They shouldn’t worry about the hitter, the umpire or even home plate. Focus should be on what is in their control which is their mechanics.
- The bottom line is that they are not pitching to a hitter, they’re not trying to throw the ball “over the plate,” they are simply playing catch with their catcher and if they do that, everything else will take care of itself.
- Teach pitchers to have confidence in their mechanics prior to game time situations. During the game is not the time that a pitcher should have to think about how their mechanics are.
- They should be focusing on getting the batter out and hitting their spots.
- Keep in mind that if your pitcher is missing high or low it is their posture (they are collapsing on their back leg or under or over striding).
- If they are missing left or right, it is their front side and glove (they must stay closed and control the glove arm).

Pitching Strategies: *Strike one is the most important pitch.

- Hitters average is under .100 after a 1st pitch strike
- * Hitters guess right 4 out of 12 times (stay away from patterns and tendencies) *
- Should throw 60% fast balls in and out during games (“sit” at 80-90% and bring 100% when needed)
- * Breaking ball counts 0-0, 1-2, 0-2 - depends on pitcher (IMPORTANT: not until 11-14 years old)
- * When in a 1 and 1 count pitchers should throw their “command” pitch (the goal is to get to 1-2)
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CATCHER FUNDAMENTALS & DRILLS | Characteristics of a successful catcher:

- I. **Leadership qualities** (positive attitude, enthusiastic, cooperative and good communicator)
- II. **Mental toughness** (intelligent, decisive and aggressive)
- III. **Physical toughness** (strength, stamina and durability)
- IV. **Superior agility and coordination** (quick feet, good hands and flexibility)
- V. **Strong arm:** The days of putting the big, slow player behind the plate are long gone. Your catcher should possess all of the important physical characteristics needed by every player on the field meaning the arm strength of your outfielders, the quickness of your shortstop and the durability of your pitchers.

The “Big Three” of Catching: Receiving, Blocking and Throwing are considered the three main responsibilities of a catcher.

Other responsibilities include tag plays, force plays, bunt plays, pop ups and retrieving passed balls and wild pitches.

80% of your practice time should be dedicated to the “big three.”

I. Three Keys to proper receiving:

1. Let the ball come to you.

II. Catchers should not reach for the ball when receiving for two reasons.

- 1. They risk getting hit by the bat if the hitter swings and two, letting the ball come to you keeps the receiving arm relaxed improving the chances of catching the pitch.
- 2. The less amount of movement the better.
- Once the ball has contacted the mitt the catcher must “stick” the pitch and move as little as possible. Too much movement could cause the umpire to call the pitch a ball when it was a strike.
- 3. Catch the ball with the same hand position as often as possible.
- If you catch a pitch down the middle with your fingers pointing up and thumb to the side you should catch a pitch that is on the outside, back of the plate the same way.

II. Three Keys to Blocking:

1. Get the hands down and keep them down.

- Young catchers have the tendency to try to catch the ball instead of block the ball.
- They need to get their mitt and hand down as soon as possible and keep them down until the ball is blocked. “Catch” the ball with the belly button.

2. Cut down the distance between you and where the ball is hitting the ground.

- Catchers will sometimes kick their feet back and create more distance between their body and the ball giving it more of an opportunity to kick to the side or over their head.

3. Always watch the ball.

- Catchers should never turn their heads while blocking.
- Turning the head increases the risk of the ball hitting them in the throat and also makes it tough to see where the ball ends up after blocking.

III. Three Keys to Throwing:

1. Move your body into the throw (use your legs).

- Inexperienced catchers often jump pivot backwards in preparation to throw. If you step or jump backward when trying to throw forward you will lose most of the velocity off of your throw.
- 2. Move your hands in a straight line to throwing position.

- If the hands have any “loop” to them at all the throwing motion is slowed down.
- The back of the hand should move directly past the cheek and ear on the way to power position.

3. A quick release is more important than a perfect throw. If the pitcher is doing their job and the catcher gets rid of the ball as quickly as possible many throws that are slightly off line will still throw out most runners.

Useful Catcher Drills:

1. **One Knee Throwing (Power position training)** – The catcher gets a partner and about 30-40 feet away, assumes a one knee stance with their right knee down and left foot out in front.
 - This drill will aid in the understanding of what position they are supposed to throw from.
 - Starting them off on one knee eliminates the footwork and starting them in the “power position” will allow them to feel and see the starting position for proper throwing.
 - They should hold the follow through to check for balance and proper arm action.
2. **One Knee Quick Catch w/ Mitt (Exchange & throw training)** – A partner or coach stands approximately 30-40 feet out in front of a catcher who is in a one knee stance with their hands in front of their chest.
 - The coach or partner throws a ball to the catcher who will then exchange the ball into their throwing hand and get into the power position as quickly as possible.
 - They can work on the exchange only or to extend the drill, throw to a target after the exchange.
3. **“Bull’s-eye” or step to a target drill (footwork training)** - A coach or the player draws line with a circle about 6 inches in front of it.
 - The catcher will assume their ready position with their left foot on the line and their right foot behind the line.
 - On the call of “go” or at their own pace the catcher will take a quick “jab step” forward with their right foot landing inside the circle (the “bull’s-eye.” The catcher will perform approximately 5-10 reps focusing on their footwork and can then perform 5-10 reps utilizing proper footwork while also working on their exchange.
4. **Sit and Get Hit Drill** – The "sit-and-get-hit" drill focuses strictly on the proper form and actions used once the catcher is on the ground.
 - Footwork and hand movements are not performed during this drill. The catcher starts down in proper blocking position while a partner or coach stands a short distance (about 3 to 7 feet) in front of them.
 - The coach or partner throws the ball so it "short-hops" the catcher, bouncing up striking their chest protector.
 - The catcher should start by looking out at the thrower and then track the ball all the way into their chest, tucking their chin as the ball makes contact with their body.

- This drill is great for new catchers because it helps them get acquainted with the feeling of the ball hitting their body.

5. **Dry Run Blocking** - "Dry run blocking" is a drill used to observe the catcher's actions during the transition into their blocking position as well as their form once they are on the ground.

- "Dry run blocking," means that there is not a ball being thrown; the catcher is simply working on proper mechanics and form.
- For this drill there are three balls placed approximately two feet in front of a catcher who will be performing the drill.
- One ball is placed just outside and in front of their right foot, one ball directly in front of them, and one ball just outside and in front of their left foot.
- The catcher assumes their secondary stance and when their coach or partner points to one of the baseballs, they act as if that ball is moving and using proper technique drops down into blocking position.
- After their form is noted they resume their runner on/two strike stance and perform the movement again.

6. **Block & Retrieve Drill** - After blocking a pitch thrown in the dirt it is very important that the catcher retrieve the ball as quickly as possible.

- This skill of blocking the ball followed by quickly retrieving it needs to be practiced.
- Due to its importance the block and retrieve drill should be performed every time the skill of blocking is practiced.
- The catcher performing the drill executes their normal blocking responsibilities, then retrieves the baseball and gets into proper throwing position as quickly as possible.
- The coach or partner throwing the pitches can alternate the type of pitch they throw making the catcher work on blocking all types of pitches.
- Requiring the catcher to actually throw to a particular base after retrieving the ball can extend this drill.
- The catcher and coach or partner evaluates the technique used as well as the speed in which the catcher retrieved the ball after each block.

7. **Tennis Ball Bare Hand Receiving** - The "Tennis Ball Toss" drill is performed with the catcher in either receiving stance (primary or secondary), and without a mitt.

- A coach or partner standing or kneeling about 15-20 feet away throws (underhand or overhand) a tennis ball (or wiffle ball) to the catcher who, using

correct technique, attempts to catch the ball and "stick it" in the position and location they caught it in.

- A tennis ball or wiffle ball is used because they are light, bouncy and difficult to catch.
- The catcher receiving the ball does not use a mitt, to increase the difficulty. They must focus on having "soft hands" in order to catch the ball successfully.
- This drill can be extended into a quick pitch receiving drill with the coach or partner tossing between 3-5 balls consecutively with little time in between tosses.
- The catcher simply catches the ball and immediately drops it in preparation to receive the next ball that is on its way.
- Additionally, for an advanced version of this drill the coach or partner may utilize a pitching machine (if available) to feed the tennis balls at a higher rate of speed (the faster the ball is thrown, the more challenging it will be to catch).

8. **Quick Pitch Receiving Drill** - The ability of a catcher to move their mitt hand quickly in order to beat the baseball to the spot it is going to and "stick" it, is extremely important.

- The rapid fire or quick hands receiving drill can significantly improve this skill.
- This drill can be performed utilizing a live thrower or a pitching machine.
- The catcher assumes either receiving stance at a distance shorter than regulation (between 20 to 40 feet), away from a partner, coach or pitching machine.
- Using correct technique, they receive pitches that are delivered at a high rate of speed (speed is determined by age and skill level).
- The coach or partner placing the balls in the machine can make the drill more difficult by shortening the amount of time between pitches.
- For example, immediately after the first ball contacts the catcher's mitt, the next ball is placed in the machine. The catcher in this situation does not work on "sticking" the pitch as much. They must release the ball immediately after catching it to prepare to catch the next ball that is on its way. This forces the catcher to react more quickly and adjust to the location of each pitch.
- Utilizing a live thrower will increase the amount of variation in pitch location and velocity, which is beneficial for this drill.

9. **Two Ball Receiving Drill** - The "two ball" drill is used to help the catcher focus on watching the baseball all the way into the mitt while receiving.

- Two catchers, each with a ball (tennis ball, soft training ball or baseball, depending on age and skill level) in their hand, and mitt on, face each other in either receiving stance, about 15 to 20 feet apart.
- They simultaneously, softly toss the balls to each other so the balls "criss-cross" in the air, and receive the baseball using correct technique.
- The baseball's crossing paths cause the catchers to focus intensely on the ball flying to them.

- This is performed continuously for an allotted number of throws.

10. Hand Position Receiving Drill - The hand position drill is a great way for a catcher to learn how to position their mitt hand while receiving a pitch.

- The drill is performed with the catcher using a flat, paddle glove.
- A coach or partner standing or kneeling about 15-20 feet away throws (underhand or overhand) a tennis ball or flexi-ball (training ball) to the catcher who, using correct technique, attempts to position their paddle glove in a position where the ball rebounds straight back out toward the thrower after hitting the paddle glove.
- If the catcher positions their hand incorrectly the ball will ricochet off of the paddle glove in a direction other than straight ahead.
- This drill can be performed as a “quick pitch” drill to improve the ability of the catcher to move their mitt into correct position as quickly as possible while keeping the pocket facing forward.

INFIELD FUNDAMENTALS & DRILLS | Teaching Points:

1. **Prep-step Ready!** The first step your fielders take and their reaction to the ball being hit to them will have a huge impact on their success of making the play.
 - They need to utilize a prep-step or pre-pitch hop and be landing from that step or hop when the ball is being hit.
 - This will better prepare them to move quickly to field the ball. It's just the way the body works...like stretching a rubber band and letting go.

2. **Go to and through the baseball.** Teach your infielders to go through a ground ball whenever possible, they should never sit back and wait for the ball to come to them.
2. **Always expect the baseball!** Infielders should “want the ball hit to them” and always expect the ball to be hit to them.
 - Teach them that in the “important” moments of the game to “want” the ball to come to them. They need the confidence.
3. **Field the ball out front.** “Triangle” position (feet on corners, hands on point).
 - In order for the infielder to see the ball into their glove, they need to field the baseball in front of their feet.
4. **Go “through” short hops** - If the ball is in between hops (short hopping the player) their hands should go “through” the ball.
 - If the ball is on a long hop receive the ball “normal.”

6. **Keep the “tooth saver” in place.** The throwing can be on top of the glove in a palm forward position. If the ball takes a bad hop the palm of the hand is in place to save their teeth. More advanced techniques also permit for the throwing hand to hang loosely
7. **Follow your throw** - To get the most velocity possible on their throw the infielder must “follow” their throw using proper footwork.
 - A common mistake is to stop the momentum as they finish their throw.

Useful Infield Drills:

1. **Bare Hand Fielding Drill** - Have your player's pair up and get about 20 feet apart. You want the players to roll the ball softly back and forth with each other while working on using soft hands.
 - They should be field the ball as far out in front of their body as possible. This is a great drill to work on front hand and backhand balls also.
 - You can even have them put their throwing hand behind their backs.

- You can make this into a competition by seeing who can field the most without missing.

2. **Four Corner Drill** - This is a quick hand drill for the infielders to work on making consistent and accurate throws around the bases. Station players at each base and have them throw “around the horn” in a clockwise direction (Home – 3rd – 2nd – 1st).

- After they have successfully made a number of throws in the clockwise direction, call out “switch” or “change directions” and have them perform the drill throwing in the counter clockwise direction.
- You can also add a throw across the diamond by saying “across.” See how many throws they can make without missing or making a bad throw.

3. **Short Hop Drills** – Have your player’s pair up (just like the Bare Hand Drill) with about 20 feet or a little less in between them.

- Have each player toss a ball to their partner having it land just in front of their glove making each ball have an “in-between” hop.
- Remember they should be moving their glove to the ball not up or away from the ball.

4. **On the Run Drill** – This drill is to practice fielding groundballs while on the run.

- Put the players in a line at shortstop or 2nd and roll them balls at varying speeds. Have players stay low and keep the glove down while moving to the ball.
- As they scoop up the ball and throw, the player needs to get their body moving towards the target.
- There should be no jumping while throwing in this drill.
- This is a great drill to practice fielding slow rollers with the glove hand and bare hand. In both cases, the player needs to keep the palm above the fingers when fielding so they scoop it.
- The footwork will be “right – left – right and throw” for “normal” slow rollers fielded with the glove or “left – right – throw” for “do or die” slow rollers that need to be fielded bare handed and thrown quickly.

5. **Triangle Fielding Position Drill** – This is a “beginners” level drill to teach the proper fielding form.
 - Draw a triangle for each player in the group and place a baseball at the point of the triangle.
 - Have the players start behind the triangle and on the call of “field” or “go” have them approach the triangle with proper footwork, then bend down and assume proper fielding position with one foot on each corner and their glove and throwing hand out at the point.
 - Evaluate their form as they hold the position and then perform more repetitions.
6. **Triangle Drill & Throw** – Same set up as the Triangle Drill but now the players will throw the ball across the field to a target or first baseman.
 - If you have access to a box net or L-screen you can have multiple players throwing at the same time.
 - The players should approach the triangle and baseball with a “right, left, field, right, left, throw” rhythm and step pattern.
7. **Double Play Footwork** – Split your players into two groups and have half play 2nd while the other play short.
 - After discussing the proper footwork (left, right, and left in most instances) you will roll a ground ball to either the 2nd baseman or shortstop.
 - Whichever one you don’t roll the ball to will cover the bag and work on turning two by catching the throw then throwing the ball to the first baseman or a net.
 - Alternate who fields the ground ball and who receives the “feed” at 2nd base.
8. **Backhands** – When performing backhands there is not a “set” form for which foot should be forward when fielding the ball.
 - The speed and quickness of the player and how hard the ball is hit will dictate the footwork.
 - The key is to practice backhands so when they happen in a game your players are ready.
 - Set the group up in one line and one at a time, roll them ground balls at varying speeds so they must field some with the right foot forward and some with the left foot forward. They may even dive for some.
 - **Make sure the players is keeping their knees bent while fielding the ball and then get their body moving in the direction of their throw.**
9. **Zone Drill** – This drill is performed to practice the form utilized when fielding balls hit to several different locations.
 - Place one ball on the ground about 3-5 steps directly in front of the player, another about 3-5 steps to their right, another about 3-5 steps to their left and two others that would be fielded as a backhand and a tough play to their glove side. Go over the fielding form and footwork of each play and then have the player go to each ball,

- **9. Pop-fly Communication Drill** – Put an infielder at each position on the infield.
- Explain the pop-fly priorities and then hit pop flies at different locations and different heights.
- Evaluate whether the correct player caught or attempted to catch the pop fly.
Priorities – 2nd base over first base, short stop over 2nd base and 3rd base, outfield over infield.
- 11. Relays – Line up all players in the group with about 30-40 feet between them.
- Making sure the players move their feet as they receive the throw and only turn to their “glove” side, have them throw the ball down the line and see how many throws they can make without a miss.
- Once the ball gets to the player at the end of the line, they will immediately throw the ball back to the person who just threw the ball to them.
- You can also separate your group into two lines of 3 players and have a competition.

OUTFIELD FUNDAMENTALS & DRILLS | Teaching Points:

1. **Be aggressive!** Teach your outfielders to be aggressive and to keep the ball in front of them at all costs.
 - Good base runners will take advantage of tentative, slow moving outfielders.
2. **Go “through” the ball when needing to throw after the catch.**
 - It is important that your outfielders come through the ball with good momentum whenever it is possible (this will aid with producing a more powerful throw into the infield).
2. **Let the ball come to you when receiving** - Outfielders need to make as little amount of movement as possible with their glove when the ball is being caught.
 - Too much movement, especially to the ball, will increase the risk of the ball coming out of the glove.
3. **No “False steps!”** - Teach your outfielders to use a drop step or crossover step for their first step to track down a fly ball.
 - A “false step” is when an outfielder takes a step in the opposite direction of the direction they should be moving to successfully catch the ball.
 - This must be practiced to be proficient at it.
4. **Field the ball on the glove side of the body** - Whether catching a fly ball or ground ball, outfielders should catch the ball on the glove side of the body.
 - This will help with balance during the catch and help with the rhythm and control during the throw.
5. **Keep your feet moving** - As the pitcher is releasing the ball outfielders should begin “creeping” with small steps to get their feet moving.
 - A body in motion stays in motion.
6. **Communicate** - Communication is paramount when the ball is hit in the gap between two outfielders.
 - Outfielders should “know each other,” meaning they should know the speed and quickness of the outfielder next to them and also know the arm strength.
 - The centerfielder has priority unless otherwise dictated by the coach. Who ever is determined to have “priority” needs to communicate with the words “I got it” so the other outfielder knows to back them up.
8. **Always back each other up** - Outfielders should never assume that their teammate is going to catch the ball cleanly.
 - They should always run behind the play just in case the ball is missed.

Useful Outfield Drills:

1. **Quarterback Drill** - Over the Shoulder

- Have the outfielders start “squared up” or facing you and then you throw a ball in the air to one side or the other.
 - The players work on their first step being a good drop step.
 - As you throw the ball at an angle to one side or the other, the player runs back to make the catch and turns their back to the ball.
 - The outfielder should not take their eye off of the ball. The player then needs to make the catch on the run with the glove above their shoulder.
2. **Reaction / Communication Drill**- Have the outfielders get into 2 lines and spread out in front of you and facing away from you.
- After you launch the ball between the 2 outfielders, give them a verbal cue when to go for the ball.
 - When they turn to face the ball, one of them has to take control and call the other outfielder off by yelling, “I Got It!” while waiving their arms.
 - The outfielder that is not catching the ball needs to back up the one who is.
3. **Cut-Off Drill**- The outfielders are set up in a straight line and set up a net where the cutoff man would be standing.
- Spread them out far enough that they don’t run into each other.
 - Each player will have a ball in their glove and on the call of “throw;” they will all simultaneously perform a crow hop and throw the ball to their target.
4. **Playing the Sun** – Pair up outfielders about 30 yards apart and set up the drill so that when the outfielder is attempting to catch the ball they are looking into the sun.
- Have each player toss the ball underhand to his partner.
 - Have the player catching the ball use the correct technique of shielding the sun with their glove or bare hand.
 - One the catch is made, return a fly ball to the partner.

5. **Charge & Scoop or "Do or Die" Drill** – Set players in a straight line about 30 yards away.
- The coach will roll a ground ball to the first player in line run who will run up and scoop the ball up on the run.
 - Make sure the player is fielding the ball on their glove side with their glove side foot forward.
6. **Fly Ball Communication** – Set up the drill with two outfielder's side-by-side about 20 yards apart.
- Hit or throw the ball between the players, causing them to communicate as to who will catch he ball.
 - Have them gather their feet, set, and throw to the cut off man.
 - Include infielders to increase importance of communication.
7. **Gap Ball & Throw** – Start with a single outfielder and eventually progress to two outfielders and work on the communication as well.
- Initially throw the ball to the left, right, or over the player's head and have him track it down.
 - After the player has run the ball down, have him set his feet and throw to a cut off man.
 - Progress to hitting the ball with a fungo after the player is comfortable with this drill.
8. **Bare hand Tennis Ball Drill** – Set the players up in two evenly numbered lines with no glove on.
- The coach will toss a tennis ball in the air (height and distance depend on experience of the outfielders).
 - Make sure the outfielder is "letting the ball come down to their hand, and not reaching up to the ball."
 - The light, bouncy tennis ball will make it difficult to receive the ball if they don't have "soft" hands.
9. **Get Behind it Drill** – Put the players in one or two lines and have a target set up at second base.
- The coach will throw the ball at a height that will make it challenging but possible for the outfielder to get behind the ball and come through it to make a throw to second base.

10. Rob the Homerun Drill – Although this event is rare in baseball, this is a fun drill for the outfielders to perform and will make them more comfortable with the play when it does happen.

- Set the group up about 7-10 steps away from the outfield fence (make sure there is nothing on the fence that will cut or injure the outfielders).
- The coach will throw a ball that is going to go over the fence by only a few feet.
- Have the outfielders “find the fence” and then jump up on the fence to “rob” the homerun.

HITTING FUNDAMENTALS & DRILLS | Teaching Points:

1. **Confidence** – The most important thing!
 - You must instill confidence in your players while they hit or their chances of success drop drastically.
 - Positive self talk is a must while seeing themselves succeed is everything. Make sure they understand the saying that “If you think you can you’re right, if you think you can’t, you’re still right.”
 - Highlight every success they have in practice and make sure they learn something from their failures.
 - The stance, load, stride and swing.
 - Use and develop drills that can be utilized to isolate these parts.
 - Once your hitter has these parts “figured out,” they will better be able to “put them all together” and perform the swing properly.
 - Pick out ONE “part” of the swing to work on at a time.
 - Example: One hitting station is Tee work focusing on “head down, eyes on the ball.” The other station is Soft toss or Side toss focusing on the load. The last station is front flip focusing on the stride and swing. Each station has a focus and make sure that is what is focused on.

5. **Use the Tee often** - Tee work is often hated by many young players.
 - Many of them feel it is a “beginners” drill and they are “too good” to be hitting off of a tee.
 - Tee work is a great way to simulate pitches in different locations to ensure your hitter is learning to hit pitches in different locations.
 - Use the Tee often!

6. **Teach your players when they prepare for their at-bat** - Players need to learn how to watch the pitcher from the dugout and not use in between innings time to goof around with their teammates.
 - Young pitchers and coaches will often develop patterns with their pitch sequences, throwing the same pitch in the same count 90% of the time.
 - The hitter should use their bench time to learn these patterns, the on deck circle to get their timing down so once they step to the plate they have a plan and their timing is set so they have a greater chance to succeed.
 - This is also a good time to see where the umpires “zone” is.

6. **Failure is a big part of hitting** - Hitters need to understand that even if they fail 70% of the time they’re still considered a good hitter.
 - If they dwell on the failures, get frustrated and start to develop negative self talk, they are preparing themselves to fail.
 - Learn from your failures and move on.

7. **Not watching the ball is the root to a lot of problems (swing faults).** Too much head movement, meaning turning the head, drifting forward or lifting the head during the swing will create several problems.
 - “You can’t hit what you can’t see!”
 - Keeping the head still and the eyes on the ball will remedy a lot of swings and misses.

8. **Live BP is a “Treat,” and should not be used to only “teach” hitting.** Drill work should be the focus of most of your hitting practice and live BP should be used as a tool for more reps or a competition.
 - If you just “throw BP” to your players and haven’t taught them the proper mechanics to the swing, they’ll have little success and will lose confidence.

10. **Teach aggressiveness, not over-swinging**

BASE RUNNING FUNDAMENTALS & DRILLS | Teaching Strategies:

1. **If you can’t run fast, the next best thing is to run hard!**
 - This is a great motto to “run” by. It doesn’t take talent or speed to be a good base runner.
 - Always keep know where the baseball is and listen to your base coaches.

2. **Smart base running wins games, practice it!**
 - If you teach your players how to take the extra base and get more runners into scoring position you will have much more success.
 - Practice “reading” a ball in the dirt, taking aggressive rounds and running at 100% effort every time.
 - Never assume an out.

Three keys to “smart” base running:

1. Always know the outs
2. Always know where the ball is
3. Listen to your base coaches
 - Know the opposing team’s players arm strength.
 - Knowing when to send them and when to hold them will help you score more runs.
 - Watch the other team’s infield/outfield prior to the game and take note of who has a good arm and who doesn’t.
4. Develop a simple sign system.
 - You can win games by putting pressure on the other team.
 - Have signs to tell your kids when to steal, delay steal, etc.
 - Utilize speed if you have it!

Useful Base Running Drills: 1. Tag Up (Players who lead off) – Set a group of players at each base.

- Have a coach or player stand in center field.
- The players start in a secondary lead and when the coach throws a ball into the air the players will return to the base.
- They will advance to the next base after the ball is caught. Have the players watch the play and not listen for the base coach.
- Visual reaction time is normally quicker than audible.

3. **Beating Out a Ground Ball Drill** – All players get in one line at home plate and a coach will stand out behind the mound with a bucket of baseballs.

- On the call of go the player in the front of the line will run at 100% effort through the bag and look to the right for the ball.
- The coach will randomly throw balls into the fence to simulate a bad throw.
- If the player sees the ball hit the fence they advance to second base, if they don't see the ball, they return to first base to pick up their sign, call out the number of outs, and check the outfielders positioning.

4. **First Base Turn Drill** – Extra Base or Stay – Place a player in center field, a coach or player behind the pitchers mound and the rest of the players at home plate.

- Have them one at a time run to first base veering out of the baseline (banana route) to get a good angle to the inside corner of first base.
- Have the coach behind the mound roll a ball to the player in center field.
- If the player fields the ball cleanly, the runner should hold up and return to first base.
- If the player misses the ball, the runner should advance to second base.

5. **Circuit Running** – have the players perform the following running format. Make sure the lead runner is half way between the bases before you start the next runner.

- Make sure each runner is performing the correct base running fundamentals. This is great for team conditioning. - Run home to first (Jog to the back of the line) - Run home to second base (Stay at second base) - Run second base to home (Stay at home) - Run home to first (Stay at first) - Run First to third (Stay at first) - Tag up at third and run home

6. **Pick Up Your Base Coach** – Put all of the players in a single line at first base.
 - Simulate a base hit to right field and have the players run hard around second base picking up their base coach who is telling them to advance or stay.
 - The runner should pick up their base coach about 5 steps before reaching second base and again after they have stepped on the bag as the coach might change their mind.
 -
7. **Second to Home, Scoring a Run** – Put all of the players in a single line at second base.
 - On the call of go the players will one at a time round third and listen to their base coach who will tell them to score or go back to third base.
 - The players should keep their eyes forward and not look back to watch the play.
8. **Get up Starts** – You can put the players at first base, second base or third base as this will happen at all of the bases.
 - Have the players one at a time lay down as if they just dove into the base and on the call of go see how quickly they can get up and advance to the next base.
 - Using a stop watch and making this into a competition will make it more fun for the players.
 - The players should be getting both feet underneath them as quickly as possible, and not get up one leg at a time.

TEAM & LARGE GROUP DRILLS (Please Note: A team drill doesn't necessarily mean the entire team has to be part of the drill).

Incorporating drills that involve a large number of your players at the same time can be very beneficial.

These large group drills can improve teamwork, communication, and cooperation and are often more "game like" than other drills.

1. **Situational Infield / Outfield**
 - Have a player at each position and the extras are base runners.
 - Explain each player's responsibilities and then hit a ball to see how everyone reacts.
 - Give feedback on the outcome and complete the process again.
2. **Cutoffs and Relays** - Same set up as the situational infield / outfield only focusing on balls hit to the outfield.
 - Explain responsibilities of each player then hit a ball to the outfield (fly ball or groundball) and see how they react.
3. **Pop fly Communication** - Place all of your players at either a position in the outfield or infield.
 - Explain who has priority between the infielders and outfielders, then hit or throw pop ups between each position so the players can work on their communication. (Center fielder has priority over other outfielders, Shortstop has priority over left

side of infield, Second Base has priority over right side of infield, and Outfield has priority over Infield)

4. **Situational Hitting** - Have one group of players hitting and base running while the other group is shagging.
 - Explain the purpose of each situation and have each player attempt to perform each situation correctly.
 - Situations include: Sacrifice Bunting, Hit and Run,
 - Move the runner over from second base, and score the runner with a fly ball or groundball.
 - Have the base runners and fielders play the balls live off of the bat.
5. **Circuit Running.** (See Base-running drills)
5. **18 outs** - Put one player at each position on the field, the extras will be base runners.
 - Randomly hit ground balls and fly balls simulating different situations during a game and see if the team can get the runner out before they reach home plate.
 - The runner keeps going until they are tagged out.
 - The goal is for the defense to get 18 outs before a run scores.
 - Switch the runners with a fielder after 2-3 turns running.
 - This can be included in the game and competition section as well.
9. **Scrimmage or modified scrimmage** - Most teams don't have enough players to field two full teams for a scrimmage so a modified option would be splitting the team into three teams
 - (4 hitters, 4 infielders and 4 outfielders). After the hitting team gets out, they rotate to the infield, infield goes to outfield and the outfield comes in to hit. Play as many innings as you can in the time allotted.

GAMES AND COMPETITIONS

Note: As hard as it may be not to, resist the urge to teach during these games (only give quick easy cues that will aid in success) and just allow the kids to have fun, compete and not worry about form or mechanics.

- The more they practice the correct form the more it will just start to happen in games and competitions.
 1. **Triangle Drill.** Have a group of kids in a line next to the mound, a group of players in a line next to 1st base and a group of players in a line behind home plate. The first player in each line steps forward to perform first play.
 - The coach hits a ground ball to the player at the mound, that player fields the ball and throws it to the 1st baseman and follows their throw by getting in the back of the line at 1st base.
 - The player that caught the ball at 1st throws the ball to home plate and follows their throw by getting in the back of the line behind home plate.
 - The player at home plate catches the throw, flips the ball to the coach, then runs out to get in the back of the line at the mound.
 - Each time a player fields the ball cleanly and makes a good throw to first base they get a point. Keep track of points and whoever has the most at the end wins.
 2. **Relay Races** - Have players with their gloves on get in two or three lines with about 20-30 feet of space in between them.
 - The player at the beginning of the line has a ball in their glove and on the coaches call of go he throws the ball to the next guy in line.
 - The ball is to be thrown all the way down and back through the line of players and the team that gets it done the quickest wins.
 - You can go numerous rounds by doing the best out of 5-10 games.

3. **Over The Line**