**Greenspace Baseball Practice Ideas:**

**The idea here is that you will plan for the baseball field when you have it – we all have things we need to accomplish on the field in the short time that we have it, but this allows you to get better without having access to a field.**

**This is a plan for 1 hour and 55 minutes or so that keeps kids focused and busy working on fundamental skills the whole time. All it takes is an open area – schoolyard, outfield, whatever you can find.**

**You will notice that there is lots of time spent on throwing and catching the ball. I didn’t put any hitting in this practice plan, but you can do some hitting in greenspace too. You can get some pretty good hitting in by using smushballs or wiffle balls and having three or four guys throw from a knee and three or four hit at one time. This takes a lot of smush or wiffle balls, but it is worth the investment. You can get a lot of quality cuts in a reasonably short period of time.**

**The reality is – kids want to be kept active and don’t want to stand around. I believe the worst practice you can have is to throw live hitting to one player while everyone else shags baseballs. If you’re going to throw live hitting – set up a time in the cage and do it while other kids are hitting off tees or doing short-toss (or hitting wiffle balls in a different area).**

**\*\*\*This is not the “end-all” practice plan. There are lots of ways to get better and lots of things you can do in green space. The key is to keep kids engaged in a way that will improve their skills and strength.**

Dynamic Stretching (5 minutes)

* Jog down and back
* High knees down and back
* Butt-kickers down and back
* Skip for height down/skip for length back
* Frankensteins – kick foot up to shoulder height while walking
* Lunge and twist – lunge out and twist torso both ways
* Karioca – down and back
* Diasukes – sideways jumping jacks down and back
* Sprint – take off like a baserunner and sprint halfway and jog the rest (down and back)

Can drills to warm up shoulder (5 minutes)

* Every kid needs a 16 or 20 oz. empty plastic pop bottle with cap. The fill it with sand and keep it in their bag.
* Slow circles above the head
* Slow circles leaning forward with arm hanging down
* Lift straight up to shoulder – sideways, out front, and backward
* Thumb pointing down – lift 45 degrees between front and side
* Hold can in hand with upper arm out and lower arm bent up in an L (like throwing), straight out to side. Move can down and back up several times slowly

Six-step throwing warm-up (10 minutes)

* On two knees – throwing with wrist and elbow only (throwing elbow resting in glove)
* One knee – point shoulder, separate into goalposts (palms out to power position) and throw – follow through with throwing shoulder to opposite knee
* Stand up – feet spread, rotate and point shoulder, separate like knee drill and follow through to opposite knee
* Stand up and get front foot to stride length – no step, just rock forward, rock back, and separate and throw – back foot comes through like kicking over a chair
* Bounce Back – start at balance point, stride to power position, rewind back to balance point, then stride out again and throw
* Step-behind-step and throw to follow through

Throw to long-toss (15 minutes)

* be sure every kid is right-left throwing every time. When they get out to a distance, teach them to throw-hop (not crow-hop)
* Make sure there is good concentration during this time – kids tend to treat this as social hour and it’s probably the most important part of practice
* End this with positional throwing – have them simulate a game situation and make a throw – what this means is pretending to pick up a ground ball and throwing it across the infield or a flyball or ground ball and throw-hopping. Catchers might simulate throws to all three bases.

Shorten up for fundamental drills – “everydays” (10 minutes)

* Short hops – straight on, with glove-only. Start with butt down, glove out front on the ground. Partner tries to short-hop the ball through their legs.
* Backhand – same thing, but using backhand with glove – can be done on two knees
* Forehand – standing up – same thing – glove starts on ground
* Back to short-hops with both hands – focus on butt down, glove out front, and glove on ground
* Two knees for tracking drill – ball is rolled and players focus entirely on tracking the ball in to the glove – it is very easy to get lazy on this drill so you need to make sure they are tracking the ball.
* Rapid Catch – back up to 40 ft. or so and practice getting the ball and getting rid of it – emphasis is on having both hands up, catching the ball where they can feel it, and moving feet to receive and return throw – don’t reach, but move to the ball.

Four-corners drill (10 minutes)

* Divide kids up into four corners. They will throw the ball clockwise to start with the emphasis on getting feet ready to make a throw and throwing the ball to the next base accurately.
* Use one ball, but have a ball at each corner out in front (toward the middle). If ball is thrown away, the person who threw it must run after it and replace it. The person who missed it grabs the ball in front and keeps the line moving.
* After making their throw, they follow it to the back of the line where they threw it – they move on to the next place.
* Next, make the throws counter-clockwise, using both a reverse pivot throw and an inside pivot throw (meaning which way they turn when they make the next throw). Do it one way, then the other, then let them choose. Same rules about bad throws.
* You can have them do this drill and have a player kneel down when they want to – this reverses the way you go. Emphasis on adjusting feet before making the next throw

Four corners Ground ball drill (10 minutes)

* Same drill, but with alternating ground ball/throw
* Emphasis is on approaching the ground ball fundamentally, breaking down (right-left-field) and throwing fundamentally (right-left-throw).
* Big emphasis on proper footwork and accurate throws

Run-down drill (10 minutes)

* Put kid in two groups about 70-90 ft. apart and have the person with the ball hold it up so that it’s easy to see and run full speed toward the person in the opposite line. The person running toward the line is running slowly, under control until the ball is tossed – then they speed up and catch it coming toward the ball.
* There are no runners in this drill – it is strictly to train kids how to properly chase a runner in a run-down and to get them used to catching the ball while coming toward it. This improves their chances of getting the runner in one throw.
* Station a player off to one side (making a triangle) – every so often, yell “Going!” When this happens, whatever player has the ball must set their feet and make the throw to this person. Emphasis on getting feet under them and making a strong throw.

Relay drill (10 minutes)

* Put players in lines of 4 or 5 to practice making relay throws. Start the ball at one and relay it to the other end.
* Every player needs to have their two arms up, facing the relay thrower straight on. When throw is made, they turn their body with glove side facing toward the next throw. This will mean they have to move to make the throw.
* Players must move to the ball, not reach for it. The idea is to catch the ball chest high, in position to make the next throw. It is up to them to get to the ball that is short or long.
* Player on the end simulates making the next relay until they are switched into the middle.
* Switch players on the end so that everyone gets a chance to make accurate throws.

Drop-step Drill for Pop-ups and Fly balls: (10 minutes)

* Players are paired up – be sure to spread out
* One player throws a fly ball/pop-up to the other
* Starts with player with the ball pointing to their right – partner drop-steps with left foot and takes off, then player with the ball tosses it so that they can go get it.
* Do 5-10 and then switch – everyone is going the same direction (drop-stepping the same way)
* Now player points to their left, partner drop-steps with right foot and takes off – drill is the same.
* After 5-10, switch – again, everyone is going the same direction.
* Next, partner points one way, other player drop-steps and takes off, partner throws opposite way, player has to adjust and catch the ball. This can be adjusted to move them around a little.

Charging ground balls from outfield (10 minutes)

* Either line players up or partner them up – either will work
* Throw a ground ball so that they have to charge it and make a throw
* You can start out with having them get down on a knee to block it – when no throw needs to be made
* Then practice having them charge it, fielding off to glove side and throw-hop to a base
* Move the base around and roll the ball different directions so that they have to get in position to make the throw
* Emphasis on getting around the ball to make a throw to a base.

Conditioning (10 minutes)

* Line the whole team up about 100 feet away from you
* Have them sprint toward you, toss you the ball and take off running past you
* Throw the ball out in front of them so that they have to sprint to go get it
* Kids love this and you can give them a good workout while practicing a skill