

Knee Hi Practice Plan

- Make sure you ask people to help you.
- The more people that help, the better off your team will be.
- Work in fun games/competitions into practice to keep the players engaged

1st Practice:

- A) Introductions whole team – players and coaches
- B) Set expectations with players
 - a) Respect fellow players
 - b) Respect coaches and parents
- C) Head coach meet with parents to set expectation level for games/practices
 - a) Communication
- D) Warm Up:
 - a) Jogging/Running/Stretching
 - b) Throwing:
 - i) Players paired up on foul line, in outfield or on blacktop. Have assistant coaches stand behind each line with extra balls and chase errant throws to maximize player time throwing/catching.
 - ii) Throwing -Introduce 4-seam grip.
 - iii) Catching – Use 2 hands, fingers up versus fingers down
 - iv) Start on one knee and work on ball flicks with no glove (wrist action)
 - v) Move to standing stationary, sideways – point the front shoulder, legs spread, focus on take-away (equal opposite OR Flex ‘T’), generating momentum toward target and follow through
 - vi) Increase distance and introduce a stride to the throw. Monitor mechanics and work with individuals that need help (check player grip on baseball, 4-seam vs. 2-seam).
- E) Group Work (split players into two groups 10 – 15 minutes each station):
 - a) Infield Group
 - i) Rolled ground balls
 - ii) Throws go to 1B (Coach at 1B with bucket for balls)
 - iii) Work on fielding mechanics, footwork and throws
 - iv) Discuss positioning (alignment of player in regards to 2B/1B)
 - v) Discuss force out v. tag out
 - b) Outfield Group
 - i) Start with catching the ball at highest point on a short, tossed, fly ball
 - (1) No Basket catches
 - (2) Use 2 Hands
 - (3) Cross over and Drop Steps
 - ii) Gradually increase distance between fielder and coach
 - iii) Eventually include a cutoff to receive the throw from fielder
 - c) Both groups should last 15-20 minutes – drinks in between if needed
- F) Review rules of the game – Basic rules session
 - a) Understand the fielding positions by name and location
 - b) Base paths
 - c) How to record an out when fielding (i.e. tag out v force out)
 - d) Foul Ball vs. Fair Ball
 - i) Is a batted ball that hits home plate a fair or foul ball?

2nd Practice: Same as 1st Practice

Players will want to HIT but they will need far more work in Fielding/Throwing/Catching

A) Warm Up:

- a) Jogging/Running/Stretching
- b) Throwing:
 - i) Players paired up on foul line, in outfield or on blacktop. Have assistant coaches stand behind each line with extra balls and chase errant throws to maximize player time throwing/catching.
 - ii) Enforce 4-seam grip.
 - iii) Knee Drill and work on ball flicks with no glove (wrist action)
 - iv) Move to standing stationary, sideways – point the front shoulder, legs spread, focus on take-away (equal opposite OR Flex 'T'), generating momentum toward target and follow through
 - v) Gradually increase distance

B) Group Work

- a) Infield Group:
 - i) Review fielding ground balls – coach rolled grounders and hitting
 - ii) Work on fielding rotations
 - (1) Moving towards the ball
 - (2) SS/2B covering 2B
- b) Outfield Group:
 - i) Introduce drop-step
 - ii) Pass patterns
 - iii) Relay throws

C) Work on base running

- a) Home to 1B through the bag and turning into foul territory
- b) Home to 2B
 - i) How to round the bag at 1B
 - ii) Pick up Coach at 1B
 - iii) Not Passing/Running into teammates
- c) When to run/not run
 - i) Force Plays v non
 - ii) Popups / when & how to tag up
 - iii) Not passing / avoiding teammates in the base paths

D) Rules/General Game Information/Situations

3rd Practice: Introduce Hitting and Pitching/Catching work

A) Warm Up

- a) Always start practice the same way, then the players know what is expected of them when they arrive. They won't be standing around or goofing off.

B) Hitting

- a) Cover the basics with the full team
 - i) Proper grip of the bat
 - ii) Alignment to plate / Stance in Batter's Box
 - iii) General Swing mechanics (Load, Drive Knob-to-Ball, Finish/Follow through)
 - iv) Bunting - Proper technique
- b) Group Work (Three Groups)
 - i) Tee Work - Have a tee to use for hitting into a Net. Do not hit into fences or backstops
 - ii) Soft toss
 - iii) Live Hitting - Either in Batting Cage or on Field. Coach pitch to hitters. Hitters should take then 5-6 swings and switch.

C) Pitching / Catching

- a) Talk to whole team about pitching mechanics and the importance of catching and catching fundamentals
- b) Find out who actually wants to catch
- c) Discuss different grips of the baseball (Use 4-seam grip. [a lot of kids this age will grip the ball in their palm, which is ok since they are small, but teach them that this is essentially a changeup])
- d) Coach should work with 2 players at a time for Pitching/Catching. Do this during other Group work.
 - i) One Player pitches to a coach catching and gets instruction, while the other player works on towel drills while waiting to pitch.
 - ii) Working with catchers can be done two at a time. Work on the following:
 - (1) Proper squat technique
 - (2) How to receive the ball
 - (3) Throwing hand placement
 - (4) Drop and Block technique
 - (5) Footwork for throwing to bases

D) Infield / Outfield Group work

- a) Run through Infield/Outfield group work while at the same time working 1 player from each group on either pitching or catching

E) Base Running

- a) Introduce Coaches Signals, teach players to look for signs
- b) Teach how to properly leave the bag when the ball is hit, don't leave early.

4th Practice: Continue to expand on the groundwork that has been laid

- A) Warm Up
 - a) During throwing introduce footwork, shuffle step and crow hop throws
- B) Infield / Outfield Groups
 - a) Work with Infielders at every position
 - b) Throwing after the catch
 - c) Backhands
 - d) Underhand Flip and when appropriate to use
 - e) Focus on proper fielding technique
 - i) Athletic position with backside down and on balls of feet
 - ii) Hands out in front
 - iii) Seeing ball into glove
- C) Hitting
 - a) Continue with Tee work, Soft Toss and Live BP
- D) Pitching / Catching
 - a) Work in pitchers or catchers during other group work
 - b) Focus on proper mechanics
- E) Base Running
 - a) Running to/through 1B and picking Coach
 - b) 2B to Home, teach to look for 3B Coach
 - c) Relay Race Competition

Moving on to further practices, the basic structure of practice should remain the same. As practices move on efficiency will increase and you'll be able to do more within the time frame of one practice. Additional items that can be introduced / reviewed as practices continue:

1. Situational Plays
 - a. Understanding where to throw for force outs or when to tag
 - b. Defensive Rotation, who fields the ball and who covers bases
 - c. Defensive Base coverage in general...what does the pitcher do when the ball is in play?
2. Bench activities during a game
 - a. Bench players before an inning need to warm up the left/right fielder depending on home/away
 - b. Appropriate conduct during a game
 - i. Cheering on our teammates - YES
 - ii. Cheering while the opposing pitcher is in their windup - NO
 - iii. Throwing bats or gear - NO

Remember, this practice plan is a guideline. There are lots of great drills that can be done with the kids that will help them learn and develop baseball skills.

- You may have to work a lot on proper throwing form, or the way to field, or how to hit, pitch etc.
- If you need help running a practice and I am free, please ask!
- Try to keep practices to no longer than 1 ½ hours and keep players moving and having fun.

At no time should anyone have a scrimmage with another team or do an inter-squad scrimmage. There are plenty of games during the year and there are a lot of things to work on in preseason and in-season practice.