



SKILLS AND DRILLS

Sports Specific Conditioning & Warmups

Objectives

The objective of a baseball warm up is that before you even touch a ball, you need to get your body ready to throw and be explosive. Shoulders are delicate and the athlete should have a complete full body warmup before starting practice/game. Below are some ideas for a complete full body workout. An athlete should get their heart rate up to get the muscles warmed up. As the heart rate is up, there are both dynamic, as well as static stretches to stretch all major muscles. For Dynamic warm ups, the stretches should be about 10 yards, down and back. Static stretching can be done in 1 spot. A proper warm up should be approximately 15-20 minutes

Dynamic Warm ups

- 5-10 minute jog
- 10 yard apart (dynamic stretching)
 - Shuffle/ Karaoke (**Full Body, Elevating Heart Rate**)
 - High Knees / Butt Kickers (**Elevating heart Rate, Legs**)
 - Shuffle, Shuffle Side Lunge (**Groin/inner leg**)
 - Toe up Calf/hammy stretch (**Hamstring/Calf**)
 - World's Greatest (Elbow to ankle) (**Groin/Inner leg**)
 - Lunge and Twist (backwards Lunge and Twist) (**Legs/back**)
 - Quad Stretch (with touch toes) (**Quads/Hamstrings**)
 - High Kicks (**Hamstrings**)
 - Open/Close the gate (**Hips/Groin**)

Static Stretches/stretching in 1 spot (Upper body stretches)

- Arm circles
- Arm across
- Arm over the head
- Windmill
- Wide leg stretches
- Pushups (5-10)

End warmup

- shuffle , shuffle explosive sprint 5-10 yards
- Straight steals 5-10 yards
- Lying down explosive start sprint

In order to be explosive, an athlete needs to have a strong lower body. Below are some plyometric workouts to increase power. It is recommended that you put these exercises in an interval type format.

Explosive Movements Conditioning

- Squats
- Jumping Jack Squats
- Same side Lunge Jumps
- Lunge jumps (switching feet)
- Side to side High Knees
- 1 legged toe touch
- Squat Jumps
- Jump roping
 - 2 feet
 - Single foot
 - Alternating feet
 - Burnout 20 seconds
- Agility Ladder work
 - 1 foot in each
 - 2 feet in each
 - Icky Shuffle
 - 2 in/2 out (leading with front foot)
 - Backwards Icky Shuffle
 - 1 leg in each
 - Carioca crossover

Keys to a Good Practice

Planning and Preparation

One of the most important factors to running a successful practice is planning. Know what you are going to do before you even get to the field. Solicit as many parent volunteers as you can to keep the kids moving and active. The younger the players, the more important this is. Try not to have any players idle during the practice. Consider running 2 or more drills simultaneously in different parts of the field to cut down on idle time. Prepare a written practice plan – you can always change it as you go – but the last thing you or your players want 10 minutes into a practice is for you to be wondering “Hmmm, what should we do next...?”

During games it is important to keep the game moving. Make sure your lineups and positions for each inning are made well before (not during!) the game. Confirm that your players know their positions before the inning starts, and that they have their gloves ready and hats on. Players should run to their positions. Have your catcher get their gear on so they are ready to go out there immediately after the 3rd out is made. Make sure your first baseman and one outfielder bring a ball with them to warm up the infielders and outfielders.

Safety

Safety needs to be of the utmost importance, especially with the younger players who may not have been exposed to team sports yet. Coaches are the best role models for safe behavior. Make sure players understand – from the very first practice – what it means to play and practice safely (i.e. no one picks up a bat until they are ready to hit, no one throws a ball until they are certain the person they are throwing to is ready, etc.)

Fun!

Most important is to structure your practices to ensure your players are HAVING FUN! Get as many parent volunteers as are willing, and always stress the importance of teamwork and effort, and de-emphasize the importance of winning and losing. Be sure to stress good sportsmanship, by making sure players shake hands with the opposing team after games, thank the umpires, etc. Address instances of poor sportsmanship right away. Keep things moving especially for the younger kids.

Good Coaches Tend To.....

Be Positive

Remember that baseball is a game of failure, and players can get frustrated. Even at the highest levels, it is filled with failed attempts at hitting, pitching, throwing, catching and fielding. Players, especially young ones, need a coach who role models a positive mental attitude and good sportsmanship, and communicates in an encouraging and respectful way, both verbally and non-verbally. We can't expect the players to be positive and good sports, if we don't show them how.

Stress Teamwork

Baseball is a team sport, and successful coaches focus on bringing all the players – sometimes with vastly different abilities – together as a team. Make sure that while you are teaching skills, you also emphasize team effort, inclusion for all and having fun.

Be Organized

Again, planning is key. Allow for flexibility, but know what you want to accomplish before you hit the field.

Be Consistent

Instructions and terminology that are inconsistent can confuse young players. Make sure all the coaches on your team are instructing the players and teaching the skills in a consistent manner. If one coach teaches hitting one way for example, and another teaches it a totally different way, the poor kid is being set up for confusion and disappointment. Try to establish a routine with your practices, so the players generally know what to expect.

Be Flexible

It rains sometimes; players are late; coaches are late; parents complain; fields are double-booked. Roll with it, get help where you can, and have fun.

Do Their Homework

Coaches should take the time to learn the basic fundamental skills of the game, and how to properly teach them before they begin to teach them to their players. They don't have to be experts, but they should know the basics and how to properly instruct a player to throw, catch, field and hit, as well as what drills can effectively help reinforce those skills. There are no lack of good books, online videos and other resources that can teach you the fundamentals.

Show, Don't Tell

Kids tend to be visual learners, and most people don't learn a skill until they've actually tried it. With that in mind, try not to spend an inordinate amount of time talking about skills. Most time should be spent showing and teaching skills. The younger the kids, the more doing and less talking you should do.

Listen

Players need to know their coach is there to help them improve their skills and be a role model for good sportsmanship.

Using “Youth Baseball Drills” – Marty Shupak

When designing a youth baseball practice, I strive for two things. First, my practices are rarely much longer than an hour and 15 minutes; therefore, the practices are spirited, and I have the attention of most of the players throughout. Second, I always use a warm-up or cool-down drill to break up a series of skill drills or to end practice on a high note. And I try to relate these drills to the particular baseball fundamental stressed at practice.

The purpose of this book is to teach coaches how to make baseball practices fun while improving the skill level of the players. Most coaching parents also work a full day and therefore find it difficult to make the preparations necessary for a successful season.

However, this book has done much of the legwork for coaches and provides the preparation they need for productive practices. The parent-coaches who use the drills need not be experts in every aspect of the game. However, coaches should know the fundamentals and be able to convey them in a fun way. These drills, if performed with discipline in an organized and efficient manner, serve the dual purpose of being instructional and fun. This isn't to say that every drill must be fun, but practices should include a variety of drills.

Some drills focus on specific positions or don't involve the whole team at once. When you use these drills, adopt the "station" method of coaching. Setting up different stations and using assistant coaches or parents to lead a different drill or activity at each guarantees that players won't stand around doing nothing for long periods of time.

With the immense growth of youth sports and the advent of longer seasons, many youth players are over coached and under taught. I have learned that it is better to under coach kids than to over coach them. A player is better off mastering four or five basic skills than being confused and burdened by trying to learn too many. I have always held to the same three goals. I want players to (1) improve as individuals, (2) improve as a team, and (3) have fun!

Tee Ball and Single A League

Fundamental Baseball Skills

Holding the Ball

Place the index and middle fingers over the seams of the ball – preferably where the two seams come closest together. Place thumb on the bottom of the ball on the left seam. Place the same pressure on the ball as one would hold an egg.

Drills

Place a ball on the ground, 20 feet in front of each player. Ask the player to sprint to the ball, pick it up, and freeze in throwing position with the ball high in the air. Check each player's grip when they freeze.

Making it Fun

Run and Grip! -- Create two teams. Organize a relay race with one team running between home and 1st base; the other team running between home and 3rd base. One player sprints from home to 1st (or 3rd), picks up a ball, and freezes in throwing position. A coach or parent checks for the proper grip. **If the grip is correct**, the player runs back to home and tags a teammate who repeats the exercise. The first team to finish, wins.

Throwing the Ball

- Bring your throwing arm back and up, turn your front shoulder directly toward your target.
- As you start your delivery, pick up your lead foot and stride toward the target. As your lead foot touches the ground, rotate your hips toward the target. Release the ball in front of the body and follow-through. Keep your eye on the target.
- Follow-through with your arm until it falls in front of your body. Make sure your feet land even with one another . . . always keeping your balance.

Drills

Warm-ups: Pair up all of the players. Ask each player to kneel on one knee - on the same side as their throwing arm. Separate them from their partner by about 20 feet. Ask the player to bring their throwing arm back and up, turning their front shoulder toward their partner. The player should then follow through with their throwing elbow touching their opposite knee.

Making it Fun

60-Second Drill -- Pair up a player with a parent/coach. Each player throws a ball to the parent/coach as many times as they can during a 60-second period. Count the number of consecutive successful throws. If there is an errant throw, the player's score reverts to zero. This will help to ensure the player focuses on proper mechanics rather than rushing their throw.

Catching the Ball

- Keep your eyes on the ball.
- Have both hands ready, with your arms relaxed, extended toward the ball.
- Bend your elbows to absorb the force of the throw.
- Watch the ball into your glove and squeeze it with your bare hand on the outside of the glove-hand.
- Catch balls above the belly with "fingers up."
- Catch balls below the belly with "fingers down."

Drills

- Underhand toss drill from a parent/coach to get used to watching the ball into the glove.
- Shuffle from left to right with a parent/coach tossing the ball with each shuffle
- Place a coach/parent in the middle of a small, gloveless, player circle. Toss the ball randomly around the circle emphasizing the use of two hands.

Making it Fun

- Count the number of catches in a row. Start the count over with every dropped ball.
- Create a relay race where the player must sprint to 1st or 3rd base from Home Plate. The coach throws the player the ball. If the player catches the ball, they may throw the ball back to the coach, run back to home plate, and send the next runner/catcher to 1st or 3rd base.

Fielding Ground Balls

- Knees slightly bent, body leaning forward
- Hands out; not on knees
- Keep your glove open as you go to the ball
- Center the ball in the middle of your body
- Lay the glove on the ground so that the ball can roll in.
- Keep your head down and watch the ball go into the glove.
- Go to the ball!
- The coach should see the button on the fielder's cap when they field the groundball.

Drills

- Organize four players in a circle. Ask them to push a ball randomly to each other. As the ball reaches them, they should push the ball toward another player. This will help them develop their hand-eye coordination with grounders.
- Parent/coach rolls grounders at increasing distances to each player . . . moving from 10 ft. to 20 ft. to 30 ft., etc.

Making it Fun

Organize a relay race. One team races from Home Plate to Shortstop, the other from Home Plate to the 2nd Base defensive position between 1st Base and 2nd Base. A coach throws a ground ball to each fielder. When the player successfully fields the ball, they may run back to Home Plate and tag the next player to run to take their ground ball. The first team to finish wins.

Hitting the Ball

- **Grip** – Hold the bat firmly without squeezing. Put your hands together with your middle knuckles lined up.
- **Stance** – Feet comfortably wider than the shoulders. Toes pointing toward Home Plate. Knees bent. Upper body bent slightly at the waist. Bat at 45-degree angle to the hands. Elbows out from the body and pointed to the ground.
- **Stride** – Take a small stride with your front foot toward the pitcher.
- **Swing** – Focus your eyes on the ball on the tee. Keep your head down and still. Swing slightly down on the ball. Watch the bat hit the ball – *keep your head down*. Extend your arms and follow through.
- **Finish** – Stay balanced when the swing is over. Don't watch the ball after it is hit. Drop the bat and run to 1st Base.

Drills

Borrow the hitting net from the baseball shed. Hit 10 straight balls into the net while other players are at ground ball, throwing, and catching stations. Rotate hitters after 10 swings.

Making it Fun

- Borrow the hitting net from the baseball shed. Hit 10 straight balls into the net while other players are at ground ball, throwing, and catching stations. Rotate hitters after 10 swings.
- Count the number of times the hitter can hit the ball into the center box of the net. Challenge the hitter to increase that number at each succeeding practice.

Running the Bases

Swing the bat, drop the bat, and run with your *eyes on 1st base*. Run over the base and turn to the right. *Keep your eyes on the base, not on the batted ball*. Develop trust in your base coaches.

Drills

- Ask the player to stand at home plate with bat in hand. When the coach claps his/her hands, the player ***drops the bat***. Time how long it takes to run to 1st Base. Record the time.
- Repeat the drill from Home to 2nd Base.
- Repeat the drill from Home to 3rd Base.

Making it Fun

Split the group into two teams. Organize a relay race starting at Home for both teams. One team runs the bases from Home-to-1st-to-2nd-to-3rd-to-Home and tags the next player. One team runs from Home-to-3rd-to-2nd-to-1st-Home and tags the next player. ***Each player must touch all the bases. If they miss a base, they must go back and touch.*** The first team to have all of its players touch all bases successfully, wins.

Pitching

- Use a simple “four-count” motion with your pitchers. This four-count method keeps things simple and will teach pitchers the right mechanics.
- Start the right-foot (for a right-handed pitcher) with the heel on the pitching rubber *or* sideways against the edge of the pitching rubber. Take **one** short step back with the left foot.
- Pull the left leg forward and lift it **(two!)** straight up in the air – straight in front of the pitcher’s body – not swung behind the pitcher’s body. Test your pitcher to see if they can stop at **(two!)** with their leg lifted in front of them.
Remember, their back must be straight if they are able to balance on one leg.
- Throw the glove hand straight at the hitter and bring the throwing hand back with the hand on top of the ball, turned toward the sky. **(Three!)**
- Pull the throwing arm forward, **always leading with the elbow so that the pitch comes from over the top**. Push, push, push **(four!)** off the rubber with the back leg. Follow-through with the throwing arm, finishing with the elbow touching the opposite knee.

Note: If the pitcher struggles pushing off the rubber, instruct them to raise their front leg slightly higher at **(three!)**. This will automatically put extra pressure on the back leg and cause the pitcher to get the shove they need. **Push hard toward home plate!**

Drills

One-Knee Drill

- Drop the throwing side knee to the ground with the opposite knee up.
- Keep the hand on top of the ball as it's taken out of the glove.
- Watch to be sure the pitcher keeps their elbow above their shoulder

Tee Drill

- Assume the same “one-knee” position
- Place a batting tee on the pitcher's throwing side – close enough so that if the elbow drops, it hits the tee.
- The presence of the tee will force players to consciously think about not dropping their elbow below their shoulder.

Double A, Triple A and Majors

Fundamental Baseball Skills

Holding the Ball

Hold the ball ‘sideways’ across all 4 seams so that the ball will have backspin (rotate bottom to top) when released. This grip will improve the aerodynamics of the ball and help it track to where it is thrown, and the ball won’t drop as much. Three-finger grips (index, middle, ring finger) laterally stabilize the ball. To make the ball move turn it 90-degrees from the cross-seam grip so that the two seams run parallel and ‘point’ at the hitter. Place index and middle finger on seams and thumb directly underneath to secure the ball. This is a sinker or two-seam fastball. The ball will drop, track inside, or track outside depending on how it is released.

Throwing the ball

The ball has eyes. Look where you want the ball to go and keep your eye trained on the target during the follow through.

Arm Stretching

Please be sure to require arm stretching exercises before a player throws the ball. The player can accomplish this by wrapping his throwing arm around his neck, grabbing his throwing hand with his non-throwing hand, and pulling gently. This will stretch the player’s shoulder. Another stretching option involves pairing up your players. One player puts his or her hands behind their back and asking their partner to gently push their arms and elbows together. After doing this for a count of 20 – switch positions

Technique

- Locate the target for the throw.
- Point the non-throwing shoulder at the target.
- Set the fingers on the throwing hand across horseshoe-shaped seams.
- Step with the lead foot (left foot for a right-hander, right foot for a left-hander) directly toward the target.
- Raise the throwing arm so that the elbow is above the shoulder. (“Thumb to the thigh, knuckles to the sky.”)
- “Lead with the elbow.” Be sure the player’s elbow cuts through the air ahead of the hand.
- Follow-through over the top, finishing with the throwing hand touching the opposite hip.
- Encourage your players to practice this with their parents or mentors *every single day. It is fun for the players and fun for their mentors.*

Minor Drill

Perform the “Quick Hands” drill. This drill will increase the speed and accuracy of their throws under pressure. Split your team in two and create throwing partners 30-40 feet apart. Create a race to see which pair of players can successfully throw and catch the most times in a 30 second period. If a ball is dropped or thrown away, the partners score reverts to zero.

Making it Fun

Long-Toss Golf – Place a cone in the outfield. Draw a large circle with limestone around the cone – this represents a golf green. Each player tosses a ball toward the target. Award 3 points for hitting the cone; Award 2 points for landing the ball on the green on the first bounce; Award 1 point for a ball that rolls onto the green. Run the drill for ten rounds – the player with the most points after ten rounds wins. **Note:** You can do the same drill from the outfield to home plate.

Major Drill

Perform the “Long-Toss” drill. This will strengthen your players’ arms. Start your players at 30 feet apart and then back them up gradually. Stop when you get to 75 to 80 feet. Be sure to teach them the crow hop as they begin the throw from long distances.

Making it Fun

Cutoff Relay Race – Create four groups of three players. Players stand in a straight line with the others in their group, beginning at the spot where they pick up the ball. All groups start at the same time. An outfield picks up the ball lying on the warning track and throws to his first teammate. That teammate turns his body, catches the ball, turns to the third teammate (*toward his glove-hand*), and throws to the next teammate. After three rounds, the team that finishes first, wins.

Catching the Ball

- Keep your eyes on the ball.
- Have both hands ready, with your arms relaxed, extended toward the ball.
- Bend your elbows to absorb the force of the throw.
- Watch the ball into your glove and squeeze it with your bare hand on the outside of the glove-hand.
- Catch balls above the belly with “fingers up.”
- Catch balls below the belly with “fingers down.”

Fly Balls

Run first, catch second. Run to the ball with glove tucked - you'll be much more efficient running then catching, rather than trying to do both at the same time. Don't run with glove hand outstretched toward the sky - you'll run flat-footed and your eyes will start to 'bounce' and you'll miss the ball anyway. Run on the balls of your feet with the glove tucked in almost like carrying a football. Track the ball with the glove away from the face for as long as possible, then raise the glove to catch the ball. Players who have trouble with this skill can be hit fly balls minus their glove to train them to run to the ball without the glove outstretched.

Footwork for outfielders

Know the situation before the ball is hit to you. If there is the potential for a runner to tag and you have time to 'camp out' under the ball, time the catch such that your momentum is carrying you toward the infield as you catch then throw the ball to the base. Astute baserunners base their decision to tag partly on the positioning of the outfielder catching the ball. If the fielder is late to the ball, or his momentum is carrying him away from the infield, most runners will successfully tag and advance.

Line Drives and Bloopers

CF should remind the other two fielders to back him up if he goes in hard for a ball. Knowing there is back up will enhance the fielder's aggressiveness charging line drives and would-be singles.

Ball hit directly over your head

As soon as you realize what is happening, turn and run taking your eyes off the ball. You can run a lot faster with your head positioned forward rather than backpedaling. You will outrun the ball if it stays in the park. When you get to the spot you think the ball will be, turn and ready your glove and look all at the same time. Trust your peripheral vision it is tuned to detect movement first before you're consciously aware of it. The ball will be within catching distance as fly balls slow after they reach their apex in flight. If you are at the fence, look to rob a HR.

Outfield Positioning

Fielders need to know how far they are from the warning track, and how many steps it takes them to hit the fence on a full run. Once you hear the warning track gravel under your spikes, start counting. It's usually One, Two, Three Boom! You've hit the fence. Practice going back on balls to reduce fence shyness. Practice line drives straight at the outfielders, practice hooking and slicing liners to build confidence.

Centerfielder - Before each pitch gauge the distance to the fence, then look at the right fielder, left fielder, SS , 2B then in at the batter.

Left Fielder - Fence, foul line, CF, 3B, SS then batter.

Right Fielder - Fence, foul line, CF, 2B, 1B then batter.

A good outfielder has no time to daydream between pitches.

Fielding Ground Balls

- Toes pointed slightly out; Weight on the balls of the feet; Knees slightly bent; Body leaning forward; Hands out - not on knees
- Lay glove open as you come to the ball
- Center the ball in the middle of your body
- Keep butt low at all times
- Lay the glove on the ground so that the ball can roll in.
- Keep your head down and watch the ball go into the glove.
- Go to the ball; charge everything that you can!
- See the button on the fielder's cap when they field the groundball.

Infielders

Getting a jump on the ball. Take one step back from where you ultimately wish to be if the ball is hit to you. As the pitcher delivers the ball get up on the balls of the feet and lean forward as the ball approaches the plate. As the pitch approaches the hitting zone, one step forward is taken, hands are out, knees are bent. If the ball is hit to you, you will already be moving and reaction time will be shorter.

Outfielders

Expect a bad bounce. Outfields tend to have rougher surfaces than infields. Plus the outfield grass is wet in the morning and during night games. *Slow looping single* - charge the ball so that you can field it on the apex of a bounce. You'll have more options if the ball is higher in the air. Match how aggressive you'll play a ground ball to the game situation. Never take your eye off the ball to look at a runner.

Noone on base - charge the ball and field it cleanly, and expect a bad bounce knock it down anyway you can. If you let the ball roll to you, a smart baserunner will be on second base.

Men on base - charge the ball, field it at the apex of the bounce and fire it to the cutoff. If it takes a bad bounce, your back up will have to field the ball (the fielder who missed the ball will direct the location of the throw).

Hard line drive (one-hopper) - catch it cleanly or knock it down, you won't have time to charge the ball if it's hit hard, and the runner won't advance as far either.

Basic Drill

During BP infielders can practice their pre-pitch preparation sequence. Will also develop anticipation skills as the player learns to 'get a jump' on the batted ball by watching the position of the bat, pitch and type of swing.

Advanced Drill

Long-range pepper. Coach stands in batter's box with full infield. Ball is pitched. Ball hit randomly to fielders. Develops confidence and anticipatory skills.

Hitting the Ball

Overstriding

Many problems in hitting are due to overstriding. Striding too far forward in conjunction with the swing causes the plane of the swing to drop below the ball and can lead to the head being pulled out and off the ball (Too many moving parts). Lengthen the stance to shoulder width or wider to start. Keep widening until the batter reliably hits the ball in BP. To add power, use the elasticity of the large hip and trunk muscles to whip the arms and shoulders through the hitting zone with the feet anchored to the ground or with a minimal step.

Timing

In addition to usual tee work, you can try soft toss from behind the hitter. The hitter assumes his stance looking forward. The coach tosses the ball from behind the hitter. The ball appears in the field of vision and the batter must quickly and compactly swing to hit the ball. Trains out hitches, overstriding and develops trust in their reaction times such that they know they can wait longer on the pitch and still hit it.

Building Confidence/Aggressiveness at the Plate

Batting Practice should be at least 3/4 game speed. If you can't throw that hard, get closer to the plate and hide behind a screen. The closer you are the faster the apparent speed of the pitch.

Batting Practice Coaches

Throw the ball. Do not put an arc on the throw by tossing the ball too slowly. A ball moving in two directions (forward and down) is much harder to hit than one moving in just one direction (forward). Pick a spot over the plate and keep your eye on it as you throw - don't look at the batter.

Pitch Sequence

To develop pitch location awareness throw 5 pitches outside (from the middle of the plate to just off the plate); 5 pitches middle in; 5 pitches up and 5 low in the zone; then 5 over the plate. Let the batter know what's coming; announce to the batter "OK, 5 pitches outside" and so on. Look for proper technique to swing at each type of pitch and look for strengths and weaknesses in each batter. Consistent pitches and repetition helps the hitter recognize location and prioritize their selections when they are in a game situation. It also helps develop a 'good eye' at the plate.

How to get out of the way of a pitched ball

Mix in a few sponge balls. Aim for the hitter's lead shoulder. Fall back away from oncoming pitch and turn head toward umpire, letting go of bat.

Running the bases

Leaving the batters box

After the ball is hit, be sure to completely follow through with the full extent of your swing. This will ensure maximum power behind the batted ball. For a right-handed batter the momentum of the swing carries you away from the base. Allow the follow through to wind out and then reverse it by pushing off with the right foot. The right foot will be more firmly planted or anchored than the left after the follow through. Stumbling or falling down in the box is caused by arresting the follow through and trying to run too soon or off a left foot anchor. Emerge from the box with the head up focused on 1st base. Run through the base, don't leap, jump or dive into the base.

Stealing 2nd Base

Know how many steps it takes you to run full speed from a standing start from 1st to 2nd base. Let's say it's 20 steps. Running is an automatic process that is disrupted by thinking about running. You may be able to increase your speed by mentally driving your step interval faster by counting faster - try it. Sliding into second - The purpose of sliding into 2nd or 3rd base is rapid deceleration without overrunning the base; avoiding the tag is secondary. To get to 2nd base quickest and be in a position to advance on an overthrown you can do a 'pop-up' slide. A pop-up slide starts about 2-3 steps from the bag. Slide with head up, most friction on side of calf of bottom leg. Lead foot is elevated. Back cleats dig into bag as calf of bottom leg acts as spring to 'pop-up' the runner balanced on the base. The main difference with a pop-up slide compared to a regular slide is that the pop-up slide carries more speed into the bag and that momentum is enough to assist in driving the runner upright when he hits the bag.

When to go from 1st to 3rd on a hit to center field

If the ball isn't in the center fielders glove by the time you reach 2nd base continue on to 3rd. Few center fielders can throw you out.

Pitching

Problem

Pitch consistently rides high out of the strike zone.

Establishing Control of the Pitch

Lead foot placement. If the ball sails high, you need to lengthen your stride toward the hitter. Hold the ball up prior to each pitch. Present it to the batter so they see it. Wind up and release the pitch toward the plate. Try to release the ball low to emulate an age-appropriate pitcher. A longer stride will save your arm, bring the ball down and provide a game-like practice experience.

Enhancing Control

Pitch from the stretch (Reduce the number of moving parts). Diagnose the pitcher's mechanics backwards from the result of the pitch backward to the initial grip of the ball. Working backwards can help preserve early prerequisite movements that are correct while making adjustments 'downstream.'

Stride

Too often the length of the stride, when delivering the pitch, is too short. This causes the ball to track high. Stride length (the distance from the front of the pitching rubber to the toe of the lead foot) should be 90 - 95% of body height. So a 5-ft tall pitcher should stride 4.5 ft to 4' 9" toward the plate upon delivery. The longer stride will lower the release point and keep the ball down. Plus the distance the ball must travel to reach the plate has been reduced by almost 10%. The lead foot should plant pointing directly at the plate or slightly closed (5 to 10-degrees) from vertical. Examining the stride length will fix most control problems.

Developing Velocity

Velocity is entirely dependant on arm speed. Arm speed is dependant on lower body strength and timing. The elastic potential power of the large and strong leg, hip and trunk muscles is converted into hip and trunk rotation to whip the arm forward.

- Start from the stretch position.
- Load and balance weight on plant leg - nose and navel vertically aligned.
- Hands in glove navel height or higher.
- Lift leg, swing arm back

- Elbow raised to shoulder level cocked at 90-degrees vertical, fingers on top of the ball
- Lead with front hip - Force is sideways toward the plate
- Lead foot extends and rotates almost 90-degrees and plants (long stride)
- Plant leg fully extends, foot flexes to impart torsion to rotate the hips from lateral position toward the plate (navel spins 90-degrees to whip the arm)

Hitting

Golden Rule: Keep your eyes on the ball!

Bat Size: Light but right, and not too long

Age	Bat Length
Under 7	Tee Ball
7	27
8	28
9-10	28/29
11	29/30
12	30/31
13-14	31-32

Watch them swing the bat:

- Does the barrel drop and make a large “U” like swing
- Are they swinging it too easily?

Old School Style – Can they hold the bat straight out from their shoulder for 5-8 seconds?

Grip: Relax the hands and Forearms

- Put the bat in your fingers, not in your palm.
- Line up your middle (Knocking) knuckles
- Keep your fingers loose
- Choke up (for better control of the bat head)

Stance

Plate and Feet Positioning: Make sure you can reach the outer half of home plate

- Touch Bat end one inch past outside corner of the plate
- Feet should be shoulder width apart to start (Athletic Position)
- Keep weight on the insides of the balls of your feet
- Hitters knees should bend, lean forward with head,
- Stay square so you can see the ball and be able to square the hips when swinging
- Bat on Shoulder with top of grip resting on the shoulder
- Lift bat off shoulder
 - Elbows form a Triangle with Hands
 - top hand even with the shoulder on top of the strike zone
- Head upright and level with your Chin tucked behind your front shoulder with your eyes looking at the pitcher

Process of the Swing

1. Load
2. Step (Light Turn)
3. Finish Turn and Swing
4. Follow Through

Load: “You have to go back to go forward”

- Always better to load early
- Occurs immediately before stride as the pitcher begins movement toward home plate
- Bring the bottom hand toward the catcher
 - Knob pointed toward Catchers Toes
- Bat and Hands should be just off the back of the shoulder
- Weight (Hips) should slide back over the inside of the back foot.
 - Back Shoulder, Hip and Knee should be in line with the inside of the back foot

Step/Stride with a Light Turn:

- When the load is completed and the pitcher reaches his release point. The front foot should come off the ground
- A Soft, controlled step towards the pitcher with the front foot without the head moving forward
- Keep your front hip and shoulder closed
- Your foot should land softly parallel to the plate on the ball of your foot near your big toe. While keeping the weight on the insides of your feet.
- Stride should be short, so that your head can stay back and remain still.
- Hands should stay at shoulder height slight back beyond your back shoulder
- Once the front foot lands, the Back foot/Knee begin to turn down and in towards the front foot (Light turn)

Turn/Rotate (Squash the Bug): Use hips and hands to swing the bat

- When stride toe lands, the back knee begins to turn down and in toward the pitcher,
- Back heel comes up first as the front heel lands on the ground
- At the same time, a slight pull with the front hand begins forward with and keeping the front elbow in a downward motion (keeps elbow from flying out)
- Back elbow stays below the back shoulder; it stays close to the body while working down and across the chest. Attacking the inside half of the baseball

Hands

- Your hands should stay short and quick as they come forward in a downward motion. Bringing the knob of the bat down at a direct angle to the baseball (Karate Chop with lead hand, punch with back hand). This should help keep your hands above and inside the baseball.
- The hands are sent in a linear path, literally throwing the barrel into centerfield, meaning the front arm will straighten out to the ball; back arm will be in process of straightening out at the baseball.
- Bat levels off by the time the barrel reaches the rear hip
- While bringing the barrel to the ball, allow the barrel of the bat to be in the hitting zone as long as possible.
- At contact, your bat should level off like an airplane landing, your back (top) hand should be facing up, while your front (bottom) hand should be facing down. Bat Should rest in upper palm where the fingers start
- Batter will then “whip/flick” the bat with fingers, wrists and forearms without rolling over
 - Rolling the wrist at contact will not allow for consistent contact
 - Front hand is like throwing a Frisbee (tennis ball thrower)
 - Back arm is skipping the rock (dog ball chucker)
- Continue your swing through contact, as if a plane were taking off.
- Extending both arms as far as possible towards the pitcher
- Keeping Head steady throughout swing

Hips/Back Foot

- As your hands come forward, you will pivot (Squash the bug) on your back foot and drive your back knee to the pitcher, while keeping a strong front side (Legs form an “A” with a straight locked front leg)
- Essentially throwing your back side into the ball. This violent turn allows the hips to open toward the ball, all while keeping your head back, while fighting against a firm front side

Follow Through

- Hands and bat finish between upper back and top of shoulders (preferably with 2 hands on bat); with the knob of the bat pointing up and the barrel pointed down. Allowing your hips to rotate all the way through the ball. (Front Foot will open slightly due to violent hip action). Back instep, back knee, belly button facing where the ball was hit. Chin on back shoulder, with head in a straight line above the back hip with the upper body perpendicular to the ground
- Make sure to keep both hands on the bat through contact. This will allow you to get everything out of your swing. However this may force your head to come up early.

- If you should release the bat, make sure it's after contact. This will allow you to keep your head down longer, but you may lose some power out of your swing.
- Releasing the head of the bat into the ball the same way you would release the head of a hammer into a nail. We would never force the head of a hammer into the nail we would release the angle of the hammer when it approaches the nail.

Drills

- Wrist Flicks (Side toss)
- Hip Turns
 - Bat Behind your back
 - Taking swings with Hips
 - Coach can have them hit their hand when they turn
- Belly Button Drill
 - Knob to Belly Button, End of Bat to Net/Wall
 - Get in Stance and Swing
 - Goal is to Miss or lightly scratch the net
 - Make Sure hitters do not step open when they swing
- Back Elbow Net Swings
 - Place Back foot against wall/net
 - Load and Swing
 - Goal is for the barrel to come forward and not hit the net behind them
- Tee Work
 - Line front foot up just behind the stem of the tee
- One Hand Drills
 - Top Hand Swings
 - Bottom Hand Swings
- Side Toss
 - One Ball
 - Two Balls, As you toss them, tell the player which ball to hit
 - Inside: Throw 6-12 inches in front of Front Foot
 - Regular: Toss at front Leg or just in ahead of front foot
 - Outside: Toss towards the middle of their stance (make sure you are out of the way)
- Under Hand Front Toss
 - Whiffle balls
 - Behind an L-Screen
 - Work Inside and Outside
 - Tell Them where you are going
 - 2 In and 2 Outside
 - Random Tosses
- Overhead Front Toss
- Regular BP

Look on Youtube for other drills. There are a ton of them out there.

Put the players in stations and keep them moving. There should be very little down time. Make sure to have contests for each drill. Teach Pride, praise what you are looking for out of your players. Teach them when they aren't doing things right.

Keep it Fun!