

4 corner bunt drill

Players divide into 4 groups. Have them gather around each of the bases and home plate. A player uses the plate or base as a home plate and stands ready to drag, squeeze, or sacrifice bunt, with another player pitching from his knee about 10 feet away.

Have someone catching, and the other players field with bare hands. Each player bunts the ball 5 times and then everyone rotates until all three types of bunts are laid down correctly, making sure that fundamentals are being done, with a coach at each station.

8 ball drill

This drill is divided into eight steps:

- 1) Player stands shoulder width apart, puts throwing arm up at 90 degree angle, holds elbow with glove, throws ball to partner just using his wrist action.
- 2) Player sits with legs spread and has arm in same position, only this time he can use his elbow and wrist to throw the ball to his partner.
- 3) Player remains sitting, only now he can rotate his hips and turn his upper torso to throw the ball. Follow through is not necessary yet. There is an emphasis on using the glove arm or elbow to direct throw.
- 4) Player now goes to one knee. He rotates his hips and upper torso and throws the ball, only now he puts the emphasis on following through across his knee, which is raised.
- 5) Player now stands with glove arm closest to partner, and feet shoulder width apart. Using all of the above steps, he throws the ball concentrating on follow through, but he cannot move his feet.
- 6) Player now goes to the post position as in pitching, and throws the ball using the above steps. Emphasis in this step is balance at the post position.
- 7) Player now uses all the steps above and crow hops and throws the ball to his partner. Emphasis in this step is proper technique of the crow hop.
- 8) Finally, the last step is long toss. We also have added to the last step, playing quick toss, which is for the infielders. They stand about 10 feet apart and toss the ball to each other as quickly as they can for one minute making it a contest.

Emphasis here is on a quick release and concentrating on the ball entering and leaving the glove.

Blind toss

A player stands about 20 feet away from you with his back to you. Toss a ball high into the air, then call "Ball!". The player turns around, locates the ball, and catches it.

Coaching Points: This drill is a confidence builder. It teaches players that they can get to a ball much quicker than they think they can.

Catcher's Drills

I think the two primary skills for high school catchers are blocking and throwing effectively. These two skills take the longest to develop, and therefore are the two we spend the most time working on. I would like to share our techniques for developing blocking skills. The basic process cue is: "Glove to the ball - knees to the glove". The difficulty is that most try to do it the opposite way. The teaching process is this;

1. In a catcher's stance, no glove, 3 balls arranged in a shallow triangle. The first ball is dead center behind the plate, the second to the right and forward, the third to the left and forward. Balls 2 and 3 are even with each other. Catcher falls forward to the ball on his hands, and then brings both knees to his hands. Do this with each of the balls, emphasizing that the angle of the body must deflect the ball onto home plate.

2. In a stance, with glove. Catcher puts glove to the ball, then brings knees to the glove. Do with each ball position til the move comes easy.

3. Full gear, throw soft balls (tennis or indoor balls). Catcher blocks by glove to ground/ball then knees to ball. We are short tossing at this point.

4. Full distance soft ball toss. Same process.

5. Hard balls, short throws.

6. Full distance throws medium speed to called area.

7. Full distance throws hard to called area.

8. Full distance throws to varied areas.

Once we are satisfied with the technique development, we work regularly in bouts of 50 blocks, 10 at a time. Catchers work in pairs. In season we cut back to 25 blocks what we have seen is that catchers will cup over the ball naturally using this technique. They become active players, like infielders charging the ball, rather than targets for missiles. The final step is to add block the ball then get up and recover it. This is the best and quickest method I've seen and/or used. Hope it helps.

Pitcher's Balance Drill

The pitcher goes through his wind up and delivery but stops himself at the balance point, and holds it for at least two seconds before continuing. The coach checks the position to make sure that the front leg is at the waist or higher. This allows the pitcher to prevent himself from rushing once he takes the mound in a game.

If the pitcher opens up too soon, their arm will never get to the proper height and the ball will tend to sail. Require that before games, your pitchers performed the balance drill at least 20 times as the beginning of their warm-up in the bullpen. This will help them get into the proper tempo.

Ground Ball Drills

Line up a team at the shortstop position

Line up a team at the 2nd base position

Coach at home plate with bucket of balls

Have two players act as catcher, one on each side of the coach. Hit grounders to alternate sides, having the fielder throw the ball to the appropriate side catcher.

After player fields the ball and throws to the left or right side catcher, the player runs to the rear of the opposite line to await his/her turn at fielding grounders from the other side. Make sure the fielding player runs around their line and behind it to the opposite side, so as not to interfere with the next person up.

Also

Line up half of the team behind second base and the other half behind shortstop. Hit them ground balls (not too hard at first, we're trying to show them how to field right now) and concentrate on fielding position (staying down on the ball) and also correct throwing when they return the ball. (Basics can't be repeated enough)

After each player fields his turn, he returns to the end of the line. You can't hit enough ground balls to your players. Keep in mind that this drill keeps them moving quite a lot. Have the players switch lines after about 5-10 minutes so each coach gets a chance to evaluate all the players.

When you sense them getting tired, turn the drill into a competition. If your line goes without an error then your line can take a break. One error and the whole line goes again.

Soft Toss Hitting

This drill uses at least two players, a net or fence to hit into, and a dozen or more balls to hit. Set up the hitter with a partner kneeling about 10 feet away, just off the hitter's front knee. The feeder triggers the hitter's swing by dropping his hand just before tossing the ball. The feeder should float the ball to the inside, outside, and middle part of the plate. The hitter must drive the ball into the net or fence.

Coaching Points: Use this drill to help players lose their fear of getting hit by pitches. Have the feeder switch to safety balls and throw harder. Watch each batter's front foot and head. Work with players who bail out or move their head back. Give them plenty of praise for good technique, especially on inside pitches.

Warm Up – Infield

GLOVE HAND/BACKHAND - Infielders partner up, rolling the ball to each other to their immediate left or right and practice proper glove side and backhand fielding techniques.

POP-FLIES - Infielders partner up. One player throws a fly ball over the other player's head. making him open step up. drop back while keeping eye contact with the ball. and square body up under ball to make the catch. You can also have players practice catching the ball over the shoulder from this position.

COVER DRILL - All infielders line up at the second base and shortstop positions. A player in front of the base rolls the ball to either 2B or SS. who in turn throws to the opposite player covering the bag, then turns double-play pivot.

RUNDOWNS - Players line up in groups of three, spread evenly apart. The player in the middle, is the base runner. One player holds the ball begins running towards the base runner. Simulating a rundown situation. We make one throw and a tag. Players rotate positions.

Warm Up – Outfield

GROUNDBALLS - Players form a line down the field behind one another. The first player faces another player downfield, who throws a hard grounder to the outfielder. Depending on which technique is called, the outfielder will side straddle catch and come up throwing, or use the drop knee technique and come up throwing.

ANGLE DRILL - Players pair up across from one another some distance away. Players take turns throwing balls to one another at extreme angles. Outfielders must run hard, cut off ball angle, then field the ball and come up with a good crow hop and throw the ball back, etc.

OFF WALL DRILL - Players partner up, with one player close to the outfield wall. One player throws the ball up towards the wall, while the fielding player must react to catch the ball in the air, locate the wall, realize the ball must be played off the wall and react accordingly, or scale the wall and keep the ball from going over the wall.

Double Play Drill

You will need a catcher, two players at 1st base, and the remaining players evenly divided at the shortstop and 2nd base positions.

The coach hits a ground ball to the SS position, the 2B player runs to 2B and then pivots and throws to 1B. The two players then go around to the end of the opposite line they came from.

Once everyone has had a chance to field at the SS position the coach then hits the ball to the 2B position, the SS covers 2B, then pivots and throws to 1B.

Once everyone has had a chance to field at 2B the coach then randomly hits the ball to either the SS or 2B position. The two players at 1B rotate positions every three catches. The second player at 1B acts as a backup for overthrows.

Double Play drills – Continued

'Make sure of one' is considered as being negative. Pivot man must get to bag early, and the first throw to that player is the most important. Try to make the throw where the 2B wants it. The 2B should only have to change the direction of the ball, not catch it. He should receive the ball on the glove side of his body, so that his momentum carries him to 1B. You should time how long it takes for the 2B to make his turn and throw to 1B....time from the moment the ball hits his glove to the time the ball hits the 1B's glove.

A good throw will take .4 seconds off the pivot man's turn. After the pivot, the 2B should point his toe to 1B to open his hips to be able to throw in that direction. For the SS, the ball should be thrown to the outfield side of the bag. From here, the SS should sweep the bag. His momentum will be towards first.

Lateral Pick-up Drill

The drill has one tosser and one player, who are 6-7 feet apart facing each other. (Pairs) Drill can have as many groups as desired.

The tosser rolls a ball about 5-6 feet out to the side. The player moves on a semicircular path to field the ball. After picking-up the ball, the player throws the ball back to the tosser. The tosser then rolls a ball about 5-6 feet out to the opposite side, and the player fields the ball in a similar manner. The drill sequence is repeated from five to 10 times depending on the player's conditioning level. The number of repetitions is increased as the player's conditioning level improves.

It is important for the player to field the ball by moving on a semicircular path in order for the drill to be effective.

Over the Shoulder Catch

The drill can have as many tossers as desired. The drill can have 4 or more players in each line. Each player has a ball.

The tosser stands on the left side of the player. The player hands the ball to the tosser, then runs out, and the tosser leads with a fly ball so that the player has to reach to catch the ball over the left shoulder. After catching or retrieving the ball, the player turns to the left, and jogs back to the end of the line.

A variation of this drill would be to work the players in a rotation of tosser, fielder, end of line. Make sure to have all players also work on fielding fly balls over the right shoulder.

Charge, Catch, Throw

Set up 2 orange cones about 10 ft apart. About 10 ft back from the center of the cones you just placed, place the 3rd cone so that you now have a triangle formed with all the cones.

Have your players line up, single file behind cone number 3. You stand about 20 ft directly in front of the 1st 2 cones. The player at the front of the line should be in "ready" position.

You now begin to throw grounders between the first 2 cones. As you throw the grounder, the player at the front of the line should charge the ball, make the catch and then throw the ball back to you. Once done, the player returns to the back of the line. You throw the next ground ball and the next player charges the ball and so on. This should continue for about ten minutes so that each player gets plenty of chances to "make the play". This will also give you an opportunity to see where your players need tuning. Are they getting their glove down, keeping the ball in front of them, and catching it with "soft hands" and so on.

Run-Down Drill

Divide your players into two groups. One coach will be with each group.

Group A -- Position a fielder on first base and second base. Position a relay man halfway between about 20-30 feet out into the right field. Place a base runner halfway between first and second base.

Group B -- Position fielder at home plate and third base with the relay man on the pitching mound. Place a runner halfway between third base and home.

The coaches will throw to the relay man. The relay man will turn and throw to the appropriate fielder (whichever fielder the runner is breaking towards). The base runner cannot break until cutoff man receives the throw from the coach.

The keys to a run down are:

- (1) The player with the ball running with his arm in the cocked throwing position ready to throw.
- (2) Both fielders being on the same side (throwing arm side of fielder with the ball) of the base path clear of the base runner.

Players:

Fielder throws to the cutoff man who will catch the throw, turn and do one of the following:

- (1) Throw the ball to the fielder covering the base the runner is breaking for.
- (2) Force the runner (by starting towards the runner with arm cocked ready to throw) to commit which way he is going.

The fielder receiving the throw from the relay man should either:

- (1) Tag out the runner coming towards him.
- (2) Force the runner back to the other base if he changes direction.
- (3) Run him back to the "point of no return" then tag him or throw to your partner.

Tip: Some coaches teach their team to make only one throw, and not worry about forcing the runner back to the base he came from, except from third to home.

Short-Hop

Divide your team into 2 groups and line them up facing each other about 15 feet apart. Each player should square off with the player directly in front of them.

Have the players with the ball, gently toss a ground ball to their "partner" so that it takes one bounce (short hop) just in front of the receiving player. The receiving player should be in ready position, and upon catching the ball, draw their hands in towards the body. The body and hands should flow with the ball. The receiving player now becomes the thrower and tosses the ball back in the same manner. Go back and forth for 5 to 10 minutes.

IMPORTANT: The player throwing the ball should not be trying to trick or get the ball by their partner, but throw the ball lightly and with the short hop bounce. As the players get more proficient, they can move farther apart and begin to throw a little harder.

Make it competitive by keeping track of dropped, or uncaught balls for each pair of players. Losers do a lap.

Soft Hands

The drills I would like to share is one that helps infielders to develop "soft" hands and release the ball quickly and one that helps with lateral movement and fielding: Have four infielders form a square with about 10 ft. between them. Then, without gloves they flip the ball around counter-clockwise, then shift direction and gradually increase the distance. In the other one divide the infielders into pairs and have them face their partner at a distance of about 10 to 15ft., then, while moving sideways they roll the ball to each other a couple of times before shifting direction. It's important in this drill that the fielders stay low and get rid of the ball quickly.

Pitcher's Fielding Drill

Pitchers line up on the mound or designated area. One pitcher goes to homeplate, one to first base, others remain on the mound. The pitchers on the mound deliver the ball to homeplate, then read and react to the ball. If the player at the plate rolls the ball out, the pitcher throwing the ball reacts, charges the ball, and completes the throw to first base (bunt reaction). If the player- at the plate rolls the ball towards first base, the pitcher then races to the baseline to cover first base and receives the throw from the player playing 1B. If the player at the plate (once receiving the throw) turns his back to the pitcher and runs behind the plate, the pitcher then reacts and covers the plate as if it was a passed ball, receiving the throw from the player at the plate. Player at the plate also has the option to throw a sharp one hop to the pitcher. who can also turn and throw to another pitcher at 2B to complete the double-play. All players rotate stations so that all pitchers have completed each segment of the drill a couple of times. This drill is a very good one because pitchers do not have any idea of what their reaction is to be until they read and react to the ball, as in a game situation.

No Rush Pitching Drill

To alleviate "rushing the lower body" and develop a good rhythm and pace.

From the wind-up position have the pitcher rock, turn and raise his leg to the balance position. However, instead of either stopping, or going on to pitch, he now lowers that leg to the ground next to and immediately behind the pivot foot. He should now be standing facing either 3b (rh) or 1b (lh), in good balance before beginning. Now he simply re-raises the non-pivot foot and pitches.

This simple drill keeps the weight back while in the wind-up. Once the pitcher gets used to it, he can develop a nice natural flow, rock, turn, raise, drop, raise and pitch. Then alternate the drill every other pitch. Pitchers, who are comfortable with it, can even do it between innings for a pitch or two just to reinforce their proper piece and keep from rushing.

Snap Wrist (Towel)

This drill is for pitchers to help develop snap of wrist, delivery of ball out front of body, follow through and defensive position once the pitch is delivered.

Cut an old bed sheet (or similar material) into pieces 18" by 5". Fold the long side a few times until the cloth is 1" by 18". Form 2 lines, with one line of pitchers down on one knee, resting "glove side" elbow on other knee. Hold arm out (the one resting on knee) parallel to ground (with glove on) no higher than 18" above the ground. Players standing, hold out throwing hand (palm up), draping the folded cloth over their middle finger, letting it hang down evenly on each side of their middle finger. Loosely holding the cloth in their fist, have pitchers go through normal windups, with the delivery being, slapping their partner's glove with cloth. Check for proper motion, balance and defensive position.

Conditioning

Base Running & Relays

Split the team in half, with one group of players behind home plate and other half behind second base. Give the first player of each group a ball (this will be the "baton" for the relay race).

On "GO" the first player from each team begins running the bases, ball in hand. After making a complete lap around the bases (back to each player's starting point), that player hands the ball off to the next person who continues the relay race. First group of players to finish the race wins.

Kids will often beg for rematches and will voluntarily run the race all out at least three or four times.

The manager divides team into two teams and then splits each team in half. Half stay on the foul line (down the line a bit in the out field) and the other half face them from center field. (You'll have a line at each position for each team).

Winning team is first to have all players swap sides by running to and then tagging their team mate. Do this a couple of times and then ask if they want it to be even more fun and have them run backwards.

This is the time when you should be looking for the player you want on third base, with the game on the line and you need to score that winning run.

All players line up single file about 10 feet from home plate.

One at a time, each player comes to the plate. With bat in hand, the player swings at an imaginary pitch, drops the bat and runs full speed to 1st. The base coach at first either gives them the "hold up" sign" or waves them to second.

If the player is to hold at 1st, make sure they do not slow down, but "run through" the bag and look to their right.

By looking to their right, they will be able to immediately see if there was an overthrow at first.

Once the player has finished their run, they return to the end of the line and the next player steps up to the plate.

Description: Each player stands in the batter's box holding a bat. The player swings at an imaginary ball on command, disposes of the bat properly, and then runs to first base. The coach stands at first base and calls: "Run through the bag", or "Take a turn", or "Second" loudly enough so that the runner can hear the command two or three strides before first base. Position a coach at second base to direct runners coming from first. This coach calls: "Stay", or "Round it", or "Third". The third base coach can give similar commands. So each runner can get the full spectrum of running after a one base, two base, three base, or home run hit.

Coaching Points:

The key to making aggressive turns on the base paths and heading on a straight line from first to second, second to third, or third to home is dipping the left shoulder and leaning the upper body toward the inside of the infield as the player rounds each bag.