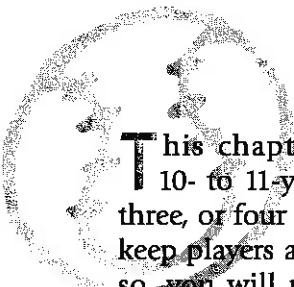


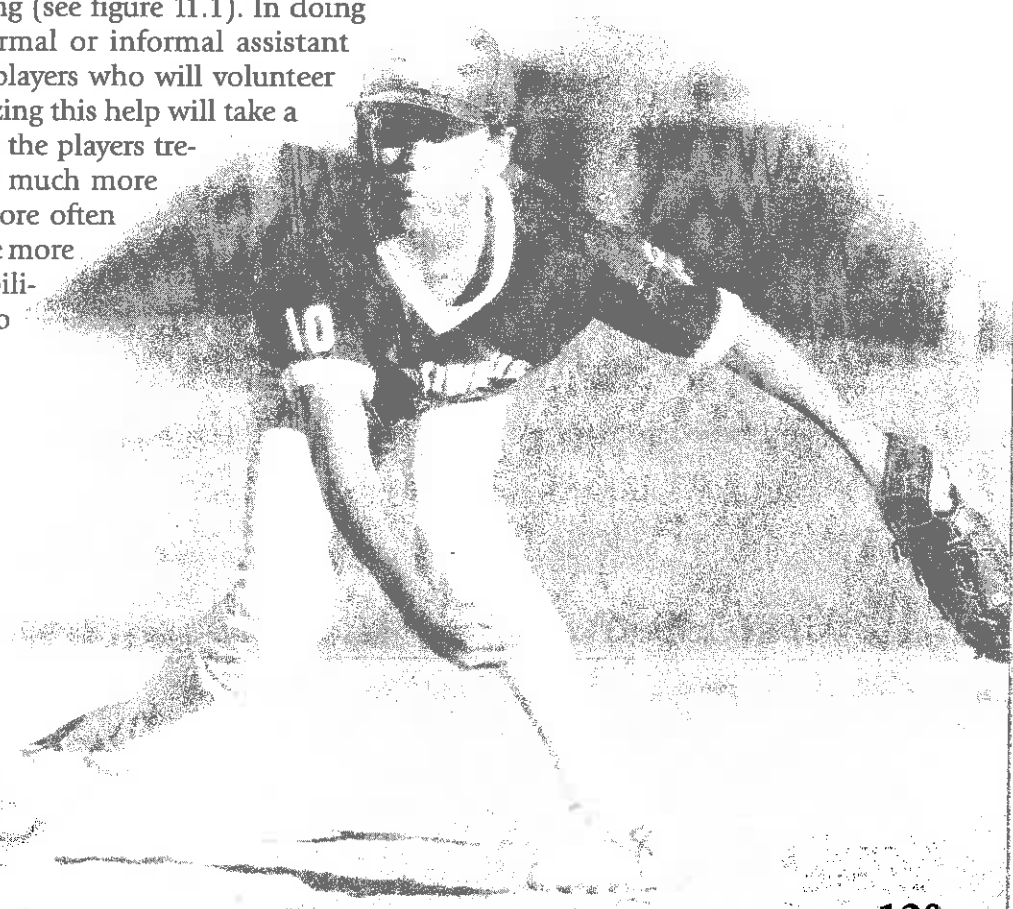
Practice Plans for 10- to 11-Year-Olds



This chapter contains the 14 Practice Plans you'll use with your 10- to 11-year-old YMCA Winners baseball or softball players. Use two, three, or four task stations in a cloverleaf, with 4 to 8 players per station, to keep players active and learning (see figure 11.1). In doing so, you will need to have formal or informal assistant coaches—perhaps parents of players who will volunteer their time to help out. Organizing this help will take a bit of work, but it will benefit the players tremendously, because they'll be much more active during practices. The more often they practice a tactic or skill, the more likely they will develop their abilities. In fact, you won't be able to run the stations as outlined in the Practice Plans if you don't have additional adult support. Don't assign parents to task stations where their own children are playing, however.

Each plan contains the following sections:

- © Purpose
- © Equipment
- © Practice Plan



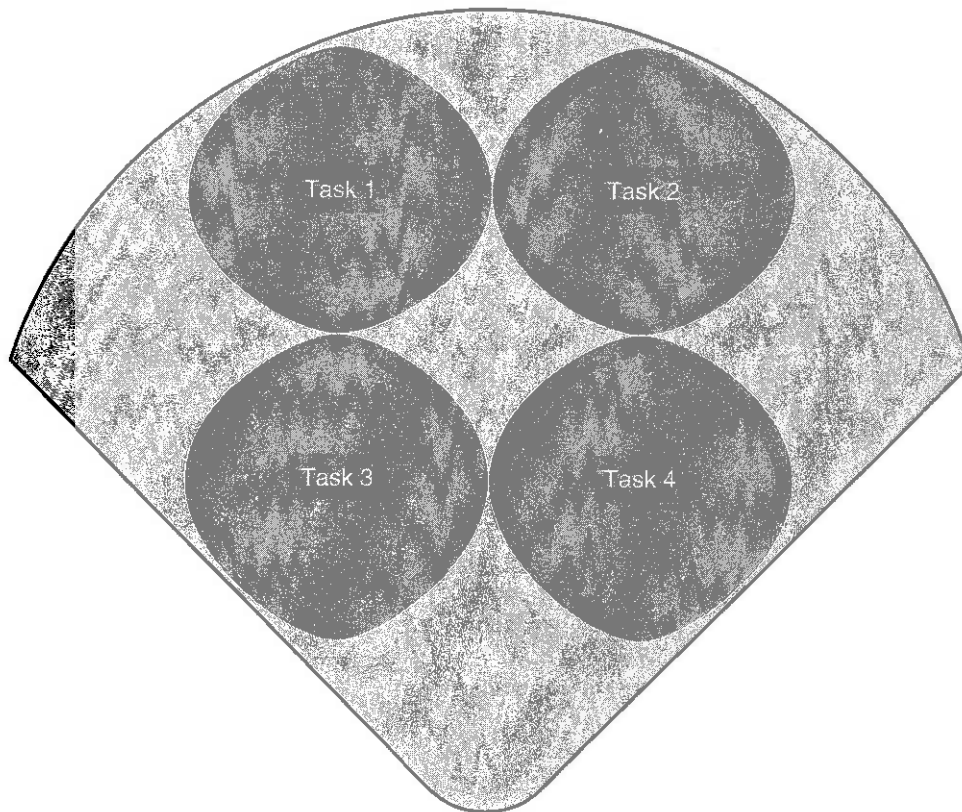


Figure 11.1 Set up task stations in a cloverleaf pattern to maximize space on the field.

Purpose sections focus on what you want to teach your players during each practice; they outline your main “theme” for each practice. *Equipment* sections note what you’ll need to have on hand for that practice. The *Practice Plan* sections outline what you will do during each practice session. Each consists of these elements:

- ◎ Warm-Up
- ◎ Fitness Circle
- ◎ Games
- ◎ Skill Practices
- ◎ Team Circle/Wrap-Up
- ◎ Variations

You’ll begin each session with about five minutes of warm-up activities. This will be followed by five minutes of a Fitness Circle, during which you’ll lead players in an activity and briefly discuss an item that relates to their fitness. Then you’ll have your players play a modified baseball or softball game. You’ll look for your cue to interrupt that game—your cue being when players are having problems with carrying out the basic goal or aim of the game. At this point you’ll “freeze” the action, keeping the players where they are, and ask brief questions about the tactical problems the players encountered and what skills they need to “solve” those problems. (Review chapter 8 for more on interrupting a game and holding a question-and-answer session.)

We provide discussion questions in each Practice Plan section. In addition, we provide coaching points, when appropriate, with Game and Skill Practice sections to help you conduct each practice most effectively.

Then, you'll teach the skill the players need to acquire to successfully execute the tactic. Chapter 13 contains descriptions of all the skills, so a page reference will be given to guide you to the appropriate description. During this Skill Practice session, you'll use the IDEA approach:

- ⊗ Introduce the skill.
- ⊗ Demonstrate the skill.
- ⊗ Explain the skill.
- ⊗ Attend to players' practicing the skill.

Your introduction, demonstration, and explanation of a skill should take no more than 2 to 3 minutes; then you'll attend to players and provide teaching cues or further demonstration as necessary as they practice the skill according to the Practice Plan.

After the Skill Practices, you will usually have the athletes play another game or two to let them use the skills they have just learned and to understand them in the context of a game. During Game and Skill Practices, emphasize the importance of every player on the field moving and being involved in every play, whether they will be directly touching the ball or backing up their teammates. No player on the field should be standing around.

The Practice Plan section continues with a Team Circle that focuses on character development. After players cool down and stretch, you will talk to your players about some aspect of baseball or softball that relates to one of the four core values—caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. Following this, you'll wrap up the practice with a few summary comments and remind them of the next practice or game day.

The Practice Plan concludes with a Variations section to help you modify the Game and Skill Practice sections. These suggestions will help you keep practices fun and provide for players with varying skill levels.

A note about Fitness and Team Circles: These times are meant to be true discussions—not lectures where you're doing all the talking and your players are doing all the listening. Ask the questions provided, then wait for your players to respond. Don't immediately feed them the answers we provide. These answers are meant simply to help you guide the discussion. Your role in Team Circles is as much to ask questions and get players to respond as it is to dole out information.

Following are Practice Plans for the 2 weeks of your preseason and then for the 10 weeks of your competitive season.

Key to Diagrams

P = Pitcher

C = Catcher

1B = First baseman

2B = Second baseman

3B = Third baseman

SS = Shortstop

LF = Left-fielder

CF = Center-fielder

RF = Right-fielder

SF = Short-fielder

R = Runner

———— = Path of ball hit

————→ = Movement of player

----→ = Path of ball thrown

X = Player

~~~~→ = Path of ball rolled on ground

B = Batter

Ⓢ = Coach

Ⓜ = Assistant coach

Ⓣ = Batting tee

△ = Cone

( ) = Optional player

# Week 1—Practice 1

## PURPOSE

To defend in the infield when no runners are on base and a ground ball is hit. The focus is on fielding grounders, making accurate throws to first base, and covering first base properly.

## Equipment

- ☒ Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- ☒ Four batting tees
- ☒ Five balls per tee
- ☒ One glove per player
- ☒ One ball per player (minimum)
- ☒ Two cones

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

- Begin each practice with about five minutes of warm-up activities to get players loosened up and ready to go.
- Jog once around the bases. Play catch with a partner.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Following the warm-up, gather the players and lead them through a series of stretches for the major muscle groups (see chapter 15 for stretches). After you lead them in stretches, briefly discuss the fitness concept for that practice.

### Key Idea: General fitness

Gather team into a group between two cones about 20 feet apart. "Do you think there's a difference between physical activity and physical fitness?" Listen to their responses. "Physical *activity* is any body movement you use while performing a skill or task. Physical *fitness* is a condition of the body. The more fit your body is, the better you can perform some skills and tasks. I will give you some activities. Run to this cone if you think it is regular physical activity. Run to the other cone if you think it is an activity done for fitness." Examples of physical activity are walking to school and walking stairs to bed. Examples of activities done for fitness are walking to school for exercise, jogging to improve sport performance, or walking stairs to strengthen leg muscles. "All season we will talk and learn about the different areas of fitness during our Fitness Circles. We'll also work on improving your body's fitness for playing ball."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

Following the Fitness Circle, get the kids playing a game. Follow most games with a time of questions and answers—with *you* asking the questions and your *players* providing the answers (about what the goal of the game was and what skills and tactics they needed to perform to succeed in the game). For many games, we provide diagrams or figures showing how the game is begun. We also often provide "coaching points" for you to pass along to your players during the games.

# Week 1—Practice 1

## **"Zero-Zero"** (zero outs and zero runners on base)

### **Goals**

Infielders will field grounders and throw the runner out at first base. The runner tries to make it safely to first (see page 85 for a diagram).

### **Description**

Set up an infield (or two); briefly discuss infield positions (see page 303). Play a 6 v 6 game (you can use fewer players per team). The batting team hits off a tee or coach. Batters must hit grounders to the infield. Players score a point by reaching first base safely. The side is retired after three points or three outs, whichever comes first. Each team should keep track of the points scored and compare the score to the score of Game 2.



#### **For running to first**

- "Step and drive!"
- "Run hard outside the line!"
- "Watch the coach!"
- "Run all the way through the base!"
- "Round first on the signal!" (Or, "Advance to second on the signal!")

#### **For covering first base**

- "Position between ball and base."
- "Foot opposite glove hand on outside edge of base."
- "Provide a good target."
- "Watch it into the glove!"

**Coach:** When the throw was not in time, how close was the play?

**Players:** Within one step.

**Coach:** What could you have done to get the ball to first more quickly?

**Players:** Charge the ball, keep feet moving to target until you're ready to step and throw, and make a smooth transition from catch to throw.

**Coach:** When you were the batter and you were out, how close was the play?

**Players:** Less than a step.

**Coach:** What could you do to get to first quicker?

**Players:** Get out of the box quicker, run faster, run straight, run fast over the base.



## **Skill Practice (40 minutes)**

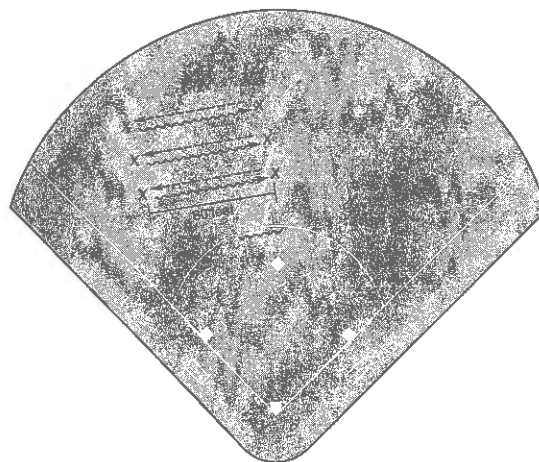
You'll follow Game 1 with a Skill Practice, during which you'll introduce, demonstrate, and explain a skill or tactic, and then attend to your

# Week 1—Practice 1 (cont'd)

players as they practice that tactic. The question-and-answer session, in which your players tell you what skills and tactics they needed to be successful in the game (instead of you telling them), leads directly to the Skill Practice. We often provide coaching points with the Skill Practices; pass these points along to your players. We also provide "coaching cues"—phrases to help your players focus on the task at hand—during many Skill Practice and Game sections.

## Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)


1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *field a ground ball* (see page 290) and how to *throw accurately* (see page 275).
2. Practice fielding grounders and throwing.





### Description

Players in pairs stand about 30 feet apart. One partner rolls the ball to the other partner five times in a row; the other partner fields the ball and throws the ball back as quickly as possible. After five tries, players switch roles. If both partners field 4 of 5 balls quickly and under control and make accurate throws (within one step of the person catching the ball), both should take one giant step back and repeat the drill.



 You can run Skill Practices in sequence or concurrently as stations, but you'll have to run Skill Practice 4 concurrently with another Skill Practice. Pitchers and catchers can participate in Skill Practices 1 and/or 2, then complete Skill Practice 4.

 Be patient. The first practice generally takes some time to get organized. Make sure players (and assistant coaches) know what you want them to do, how you want them to do it, and why.

 Use only the number of players necessary to perform the drill or game. Don't have players standing in line.

### COACH'S cues



### Fielding grounders

- "Ready position!"
- "Feet to the ball!"
- "Glove on the ground!"
- "Catch and cover!" (with nonglove hand)

### Throwing

- "Bring the ball way back!"
- "Step with the opposite foot!"
- "Follow through to the target!"

### For advanced players

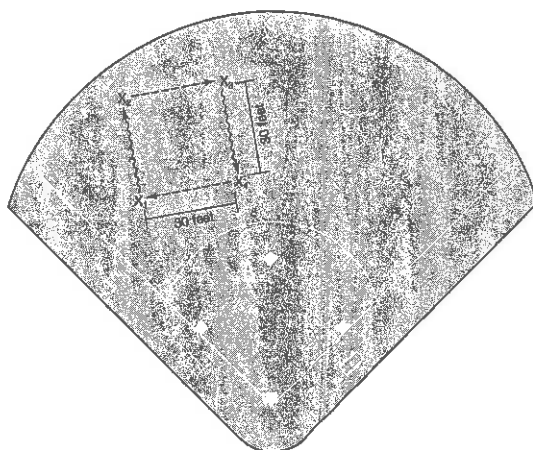
- "Charge the ball!"
- "Look the ball into the glove!"
- "One smooth move from catch to throw!"
- "Keep the feet moving to the target!"
- "Step and throw!"

# Week 1—Practice 1

## Skill Practice 2 (10 minutes)

### Description

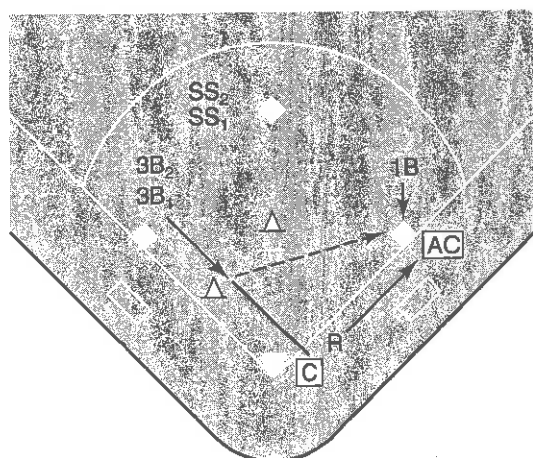
Players practice fielding and throwing. Four players form a square, with a person at each corner. The first player rolls the ball to the player to his or her left. That player fields the grounder and quickly throws the ball to the next player on the left. That player then rolls the ball to the next player on the left, who fields and throws quickly to the next player, and so on. After five times around the square, the players exchange rolling and throwing roles.



## Skill Practice 3 (20 minutes)

### Description

Players practice fielding and throwing. Place two players at shortstop and two players at third base, one behind the other. (They will take turns fielding the ball.) Also include a first base player. Extra players serve as runners. Place one cone halfway between home plate and third base and another cone on the pitcher's mound. Hit ground balls, alternating between third base and shortstop. Fielders should charge the ball and attempt to field it before it reaches the imaginary line between the cones, then make the play at first base. Another coach or parent should be at first base to assist the first base player with proper footwork and to give feedback to the runners (running outside the basepath, running hard to first, watching the coach, running over the base without leaping). After three trials at each position, players rotate. Discuss the *running out of the baseline* rule (see page 298) and running bases in general.



## Skill Practice 4 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *pitch* (see pages 279 and 283) and *catch* (see page 286).
2. Practice pitching and catching.



# Week 1—Practice 1 (cont'd)



If possible, assign a coach or parent to be in charge of pitchers and catchers, because their practice should be closely monitored and controlled.

## Description

Pitchers should begin throwing, *slow to moderate* speed. Focus on form. Catchers should also begin working on technique.

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat Game 1. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

## Team Circle (5 minutes)

Conclude practice by gathering your players and leading them through the same stretches you led them through in the Fitness Circle. After stretching, discuss a character development concept. These aren't lectures; you want your players' active participation in these discussions and activities. Following the discussion, wrap up the practice with a few comments (see below).

### Key Idea: Four core values

Gather team into a group near four cones about five feet apart. "We're going to talk about four main values or qualities that good players include in their games and practices. What are the four?" Have players stand at a cone when they provide a value. Have another player provide an example of the value, then have that player join the other player at the cone. Help them if they can't think of all four (caring, honesty, respect, responsibility). "We'll work to improve our skills and physical fitness, but these four values are just as important to learn and practice to help you become good players. We will learn about these values during our Team Circles."

### Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and remind players of the next practice.

## Variations

- Work with pitchers and catchers for about 30 minutes after practice, if possible. This allows them to learn skills and tactics along with the rest of the team. Also monitor how much each pitcher has thrown during practice.
- If you have a number of players without previous experience, put them on a separate field and provide them with some one-on-one (one coach to one player) or one-on-two attention.
- Games may be played 4 v 4 or 5 v 5, depending on the number of players you have to work with.



# Week 1—Practice 2

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Jog once around the bases. Play catch with a partner.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: General fitness

Gather team into a group. "Who can tell me what 'warm up' means?" Listen to their responses. They might mention getting the body ready to do more strenuous activity, increasing blood circulation, and moving muscles so they are more flexible and will help prevent injuries. Discuss their responses and other possible responses.

"Raise your hand if you think the muscles actually get warmer during warm-up activities?" Listen to their responses. "They do get warmer from the blood circulating and your moving. Give me some examples of good warm-up activities." Choose one for the team to try. "The warm-up is an important part of a good fitness program. We will do a warm-up activity every practice."

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

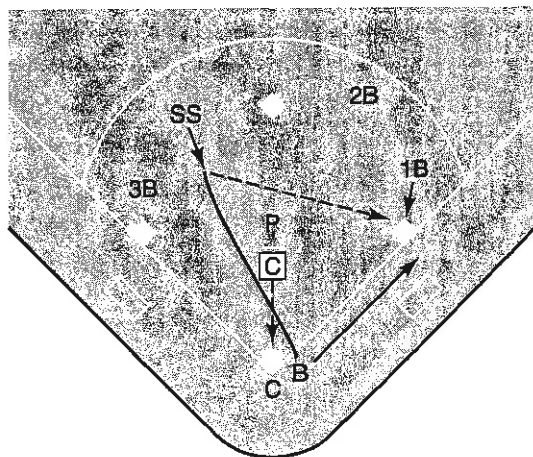
**"Zero-Zero"**  
(zero outs and  
zero runners on base)

### Goals

Infielders will field grounders and throw the runner out at first base. The runner tries to make it safely to first.

### Description

Set up an infield (or two). Play a 6 v 6 game (you can use fewer players per team). The batting team hits off a tee or coach. Batters must hit grounders to the infield. Players score a point by reaching first base safely. The side is retired after three points or three outs, whichever



## PURPOSE

To defend in the infield when no runners are on base and a ground ball is hit. The focus is on fielding grounders, making accurate throws to first base, and covering first base properly, including having the pitcher cover first.

## Equipment

- ☒ Six bases, two home plates (set up two fields, minimum)
- ☒ Four batting tees
- ☒ Five balls per tee
- ☒ One glove per player
- ☒ One ball per player (minimum)

# Week 1—Practice 2 (cont'd)

- comes first. Each team should keep track of the runs scored and compare the score to the score of Game 2.



Coach: When the throw was not in time, how close was the play?

Players: Within one step.

Coach: What could you have done to get the ball to first more quickly?

Players: Charge the ball, keep feet moving to target until you're ready to step and throw, smooth transition from catch to throw.

## Skill Practice (40 minutes)


### Skill Practice 1

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *hit* (see page 268).
2. Practice hitting.

#### Description

Set up batting tees within 5 feet of a fence (see page 86 for a diagram). Batters hit into the fence. Each player takes 10 hits in a row and then rotates. One player gives feedback and instruction. The next hitter retrieves balls and places them on the tee for the batter. Remind players about safety: Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter.



 You can run Skill Practices in sequence or concurrently as stations, but you'll have to run Skill Practice 4 concurrently with another Skill Practice. Pitchers and catchers can participate in Skill Practices 1 and/or 2, then complete Skill Practice 4.

#### COACH's cues



"Ready position!"

"Watch the ball on the batting tee!"

"Step and swing fast!"

"Contact in the power zone!"

### Skill Practice 2

#### Description

Players practice fielding and throwing. Four players form a square, with a person at each corner (see page 135 for a diagram). The first player rolls the ball to the player to his or her left. That player fields the grounder and quickly throws the ball to the next player on the left. That player then rolls the ball to the next player on the left, who fields and throws quickly to the next player, and so on. After five times around the square, the players exchange rolling and throwing roles.

# Week 1—Practice 2

## COACH'S CUES



### Fielding grounders

- "Ready position!"
- "Feet to the ball!"
- "Glove on the ground!"
- "Catch and cover!" (with nonglove hand)

### For throwing

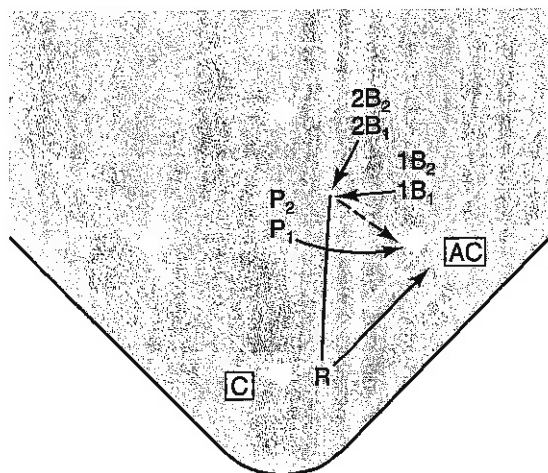
- "Bring the ball way back!"
- "Step with the opposite foot!"
- "Follow through to the target!"

## Skill Practice 3

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how the pitcher covers first base (see page 290).
2. Practice fielding, throwing, and backing up.

### Description

Place two players at second base, two players at pitcher, and two players at first base, one behind the other (they will take turns fielding the ball). Extra players serve as runners. Hit ground balls, alternating among second base, first base, and the pitcher. Fielders should charge the ball, field it, and make the play at first base. Another coach or parent should be at first base to assist the first base player with proper footwork and to give feedback to the runners (running outside the basewidth, running hard to first, watching the coach, running over the base without leaping). After three trials at each position, players rotate. Discuss the *running out of the baseline* rule (see page 298) and running bases in general.



## COACH'S CUES



### For running to first


- "Step and drive!"
- "Run hard outside the line!"
- "Watch the coach!"
- "Run all the way through the base!"
- "Round first on the signal!" (Or, "Advance to second on the signal!")

### For covering first base

- "Position between ball and base."
- "Foot opposite glove hand on outside edge of base."
- "Provide a good target."
- "Watch it into the glove!"

# Week 1—Practice 2 (cont'd)



 Pitchers and catchers can participate in one or two other Skill Practices, then complete Skill Practice 4.

## Skill Practice 4 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

### Description

Pitchers practice pitching. They should throw at *slow to moderate* speed, focusing on form. Catchers should also work on technique.

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat Game 1. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

## Team Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Caring

Gather team into a circle near two cones about 10 feet apart. Ask one player to demonstrate with you. Have the player accidentally trip you. Fall down as if you are hurt. "Anna accidentally tripped me. What should she do? If you think she should apologize and help me up, stand at this cone. If you think she should keep playing, stand at this cone." Encourage all players to vote. Discuss why they voted the way they did. Tactfully explain the "caring action" so players don't feel foolish for not realizing they should help. "When you accidentally trip or hurt other players—opponents or teammates—it's important to help them up to see if they are okay. That shows that you care about other players."

### Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and remind players of the next practice.



## Variations

- Players waiting to bat can practice bat speed or do strengthening exercises such as push-ups or wrist rolls.
- Games may be played 4 v 4 or 5 v 5, depending on the number of players you have to work with.