

Week 2—Practice 1

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Jog once around the bases. Play catch with a partner. After about five minutes, throw grounders back and forth between partners.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Cardiorespiratory fitness

Gather team into a group. "Who can tell me what *cardiorespiratory fitness* is?" When you have good cardiorespiratory fitness, your heart picks up oxygen from your lungs and takes it all over your body. Ask four players to demonstrate. Have one ball ready. The players should be spread out in a zigzag line; the ball will be rolled down the line. Stagger players so the ball is passed across to each other, one side then the other side, in the line. "Let's set up our own blood vessel to carry oxygen to the muscles."

Set up and perform activity, with player 1 being the heart, player 2 the lungs, player 3 the legs, and then back to player 1. "We need to run more to improve our body's ability to get oxygen to our muscles. That is improving our cardiorespiratory fitness."

Game 1 (10 minutes)

"Movin' on Up"

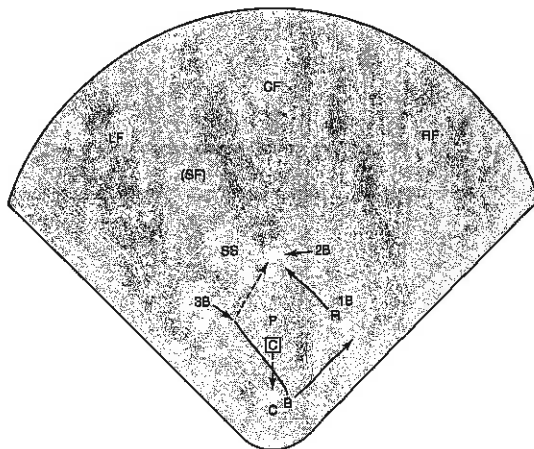
Goals

The offense tries to advance the runner to second base. The defense tries to get the runner out at second base.

Description

Set up an infield (or two).

Play a 6 v 6 game (you can use more players per team). The batting teams start with a runner at first base. Batters hit off a tee or coach and run to first base. If the runner gets to second base safely, the offense scores a point. The runner can continue to run and score again



PURPOSE

To defend in the infield, executing force plays at second base. The focus is on proper execution on the force play as well as proper baserunning.

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 2—Practice 1 (cont'd)

- by crossing home plate. The fielding team attempts to get the runner out at second base. The side is retired after three points or three outs, whichever comes first. Teams should keep score and compare their scores in Game 2.



Coach: What was the goal of the game if you were an infielder?

Players: Get the runner out at second base.

Coach: Who covered the base if the ball was hit to the right side? Left side?

Players: Shortstop (right side); second base player (left side).

Coach: When running from first to second base, how do you know when to take off? How to stop quickly?

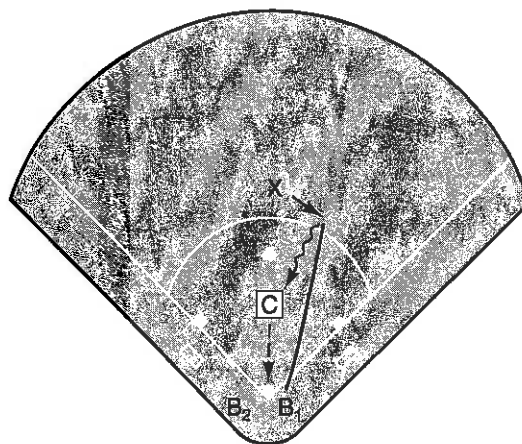
Players: Take off when the batter hits the ball. Stop quickly by leaning back; bending hips, knees, and ankles to absorb force; and holding onto the base with your foot.

Skill Practice (40 minutes)

Skill Practice 1

Description

- Players practice hitting. Each player takes 10 swings and then rotates. One player gives feedback and instruction. Another player retrieves balls and rolls them back to the coach. Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter.



COACH's cues



"Ready position!"

"Watch the ball out of the pitcher's hand!"

"Step and swing fast!"

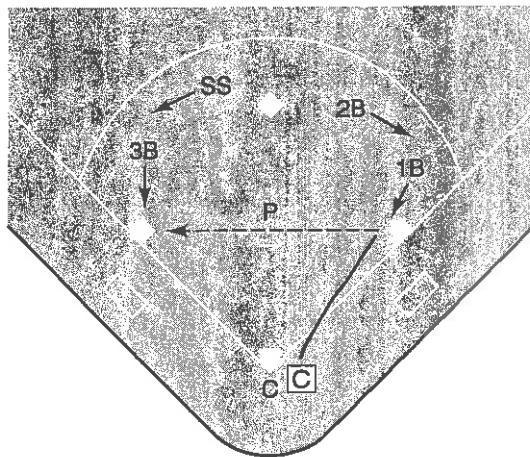
"Contact in the power zone!"

Week 2—Practice 1

Skill Practice 2

Description

Infielders practice fielding and throwing. Hit or throw balls onto the infield, alternating among grounders, pop-ups, and line drives. Make players cover ground to get to the ball. Players field and throw to the base you designate. Players rotate after three trials at each position. Focus on backups, charging the ball, and quick transitions from catching to throwing. Review the *infield fly rule* (see page 297).



Skill Practice 3

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to make a *force play* (see page 256).
2. Practice force plays at second base.

Description

Place players at first, second, third, and shortstop. Extra players serve as runners. Place a runner at first base. The runner takes off on your signal and continues to second base. Hit ground balls, alternating among the four infield positions. Fielders charge and field the ball, then make an accurate throw to second base. Place another coach or parent at first base to offer instruction and feedback to the first and second base players. After three trials at each position, players rotate. Review rules related to the *force play* (see page 256) and when a runner can leave the base (see tables 14.1 and 14.2, pages 300 and 301, respectively).

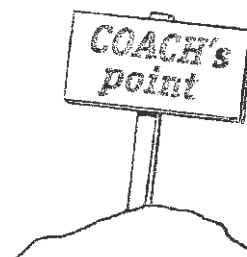


For catching ball on a force-out

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

For baserunning


- "Take off on contact!"
- "Run hard!"



☞ Encourage players to start in their proper positions so that the practice is more gamelike. Don't let them sneak closer to the base so they won't have so far to run to make the play.

Week 2—Practice 1 (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: Responsibility

Gather players into a group. Have a clipboard and act as if you are writing or working. Do not pay attention to the group. Continue for one minute. "Hello, everybody. Now I am ready to talk about our Team Circle for today. How did you feel having to wait for me to get ready to talk to you?" Listen to responses. "Waiting for someone to be ready during practice wastes time. Even if it is a coach. I demonstrated how time is wasted if someone isn't prepared for practice. I read and prepare before practice so I am ready. I want you to do the same. You have a responsibility to the team to be ready when it is time for every practice to start. What do you do at home to get ready for practice?" Discuss responses.

Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice and give reminders for the next practice.

Variations

- Perform the practices for Weeks 4 and 5 before performing this practice.
- Set up a situation similar to Skill Practice 3 in which players have to flip the ball to the player covering second base.
- Advanced players can work on turning a double play, perhaps on a separate field.

Week 2—Practice 2

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

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

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Cardiorespiratory fitness

Gather team into a circle. "What fitness area improves when we run more and strengthen our heart and lungs? *Cardiorespiratory fitness*. When we run more during practice to improve our cardiorespiratory fitness, what will start to happen?" Listen to their responses. Discuss getting fatigued if they run too fast early in the practice. "If you don't want to tire early in the practice, we can use a special test to help you judge how fast to run. It's called a talk test. A talk test can tell you if you're running too fast for your body and need to slow down.

Everyone jog around the bases, and while you're running say, 'single-double-triple-homer.'

You should not be out of breath while you're talking; if you are, slow down!"

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

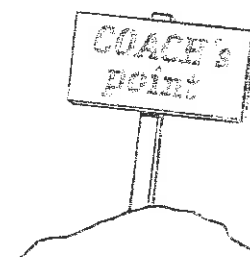
Set up an infield (or two) (see page 137 for a diagram). Play a 6 v 6 game (you can use fewer players per team). The batting team hits off a tee or coach. Batters must hit grounders to the infield. Players score a point by reaching first base safely and, if possible, may continue to advance (though they don't score extra points by advancing). 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.


PURPOSE

To defend third base in tag situations as well as to demonstrate proper hitting and baserunning techniques.

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)



-  Encourage players to communicate on every play in the Game and Skill Practice parts of practice.

Week 2—Practice 2 (cont'd)



Coach: What's the difference between a force play and a tag play?

Players: A force play is when the runner must run to the next base, and a tag play is when the runner can choose to advance or stay on their current base. In a force play, the fielder tags the base; in a tag play, the fielder tags the runner.

Coach: How effectively did your team keep runners off base or keep them from advancing?

Players: Sometimes, but not always.

Coach: How often were runners out by a step or less at first base?

Players: Often, usually very close plays.

Coach: What are some things the batter can do to get to first base quickly?

Players: Get out of the box quickly, run hard and fast, run "through" the base.

Skill Practice (40 minutes)

Skill Practice 1

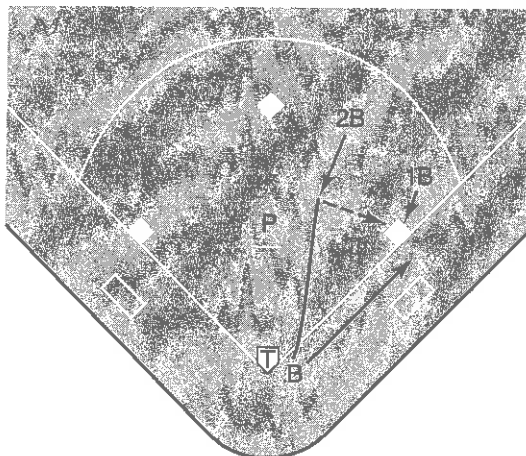
Description

Players practice hitting. 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. Players on deck should take 10 to 20 practice swings, working on technique and timing.

Skill Practice 2

Description

Practice force plays at first base. Play a 3 v 3 game with a pitcher, second and first base players, and three batters. Batters hit from a tee. They must hit grounders to the right side of the infield. Batters take turns, each getting three at-bats; they score a point every time they reach first safely. Players rotate positions each inning. The game is completed after three innings or 15 minutes, whichever comes first.

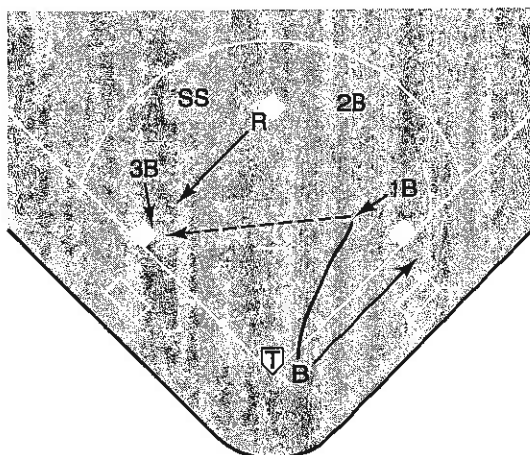


As needed, review who covers first and how to cover first. Also review *defensive* and *offensive interference* rules as needed (see pages 296 and 297, respectively).

Week 2—Practice 2

Skill Practice 3

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to make a *tag play* (see page 259).
2. Practice tag plays at third base.



Description

Play a game with players at first, second, third, and shortstop and three batters.

The offense begins with a runner on second at all times. Batters hit from a tee. They must hit ground balls and run to first. The runner on second should advance to third and must be tagged out.

COACH'S cues



"Select your position!" (depending on angle of incoming ball)
"Ready position!"
"Straddle the base!"
"Watch the ball into the glove!"
"Catch firmly!"
"Sweep low!"

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. Review rules related to *pitching* (see pages 279 and 283).

Game 2 (10 minutes)

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



Some players will have difficulty controlling the ball off the tee. Help them focus on body positioning as well as where to contact the ball.



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

Week 2—Practice 2 (cont'd)

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Respect

Gather team into a group near two cones about 10 feet apart. "What is one important thing you can do at the end of every game to show you have respect for your opponent?" Listen to responses—discuss shaking or slapping hands, saying "good game." "Let's say some kids on the other team start walking away following a game. What should you do? If you think you should let them walk away without saying anything or trying to shake hands, stand at this cone. If you think you should say 'good game' and hold your hand out anyway, stand at this cone." All players should choose. Ask why they chose as they did. "You should shake hands or say 'good game' after every game—it shows respect for your opponent. If the other team turns away and doesn't participate, you shouldn't change your behavior."

Wrap-Up

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



Variations

Run Skill Practices 1 and 2 simultaneously, focusing on both offense and defense.