

# Practice 3

## PURPOSE

To defend space by infield position and to get on base, focusing on the situation in which there are no outs, no runners on base, and a grounder to the infield. The objectives are for players to be able to hit and run to first base, as well as to field grounders and make an accurate throw to first base. They also will review the infield positions (first, second, third, shortstop, pitcher, and catcher).

## Equipment

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

## Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Players play catch with you or an assistant coach.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Muscular strength and endurance

Gather children into a circle. "Everyone find your own space so that you don't bump your neighbor. You're going to run in your own spot for 30 seconds, then stop. Ready, go!" Time children and verbally let them know the time remaining; stop them at the end of the time. "What part of the body did we just use the most when we ran?" Encourage their responses. "When we play baseball [softball] which parts of the body do we use the most?" Wait for their responses. "Muscles in our body help us move our arms and legs. Playing baseball [softball] will help our arm and leg muscles get stronger and grow bigger."

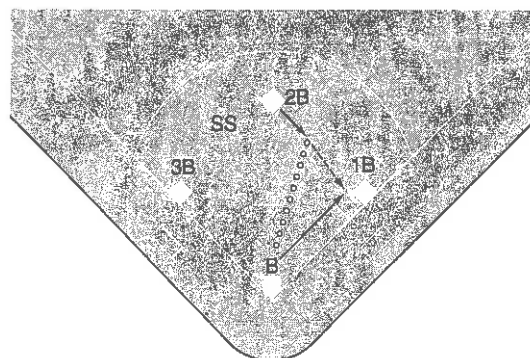
## Game 1 (10 minutes)

### Goal

Players will hit and run to first before the throw gets to the first-base player.  
Players will field and throw the ball to first base before the runner gets there.  
Players will review the basic positions of infielders: first, second, third, shortstop, pitcher, and catcher.

### Description

4 v 4 (you can add more players if needed, but use no more than 6 v 6)  
—the batter hits the ball off a tee and runs to first base; if safe, he or she scores a point. The runner can continue running bases and can score a run if she or he crosses home plate. The fielders attempt to field



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and throw the ball to first base before the runner gets there (a play will only be attempted at first base). The side is retired after three points or three outs, whichever comes first. Keep score and compare it to the score of Game 2. Discuss rules related to foul balls and outs (see pages 137-138).

Coach: "What was the goal of that game if you were batting?"

Players: "The goal was to hit and run to first before the throw."

Coach: "Why is it important to get to first base quickly?"

Players: "You run quickly so you can go to the next base and score runs."

Coach: "So, the more times we get on first, the more times we'll get to ...?"

Players: "Score runs!"



## Skill Practice 1 (5 minutes)

### Description

Set up three or four batting stations. With you or an assistant coach, players work on striking the ball off a tee, hitting it against a fence.

## Skill Practice 2 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to hit and run quickly to first base (see pages 130-131). Focus on the first step after the swing. Tell the children to run slightly outside the base line; this will help keep them from being hit by the throw to first and still usually allow them to approach the base without running into the infielder at first base. Also tell them to run (or overrun) all the way *through* first base and not to leap.
2. Have the players practice their hitting and running to first base quickly.

### Description

Individual—players do a mock swing and run to first base, three or four times each. Discuss the rules related to running to first base, such as running too far outside the line (see page 138).



For Hitting and Running to First Base

"Get in the ready position."

"Watch the ball on the batting tee."

"Step and swing fast."

"Step and drive to first base."

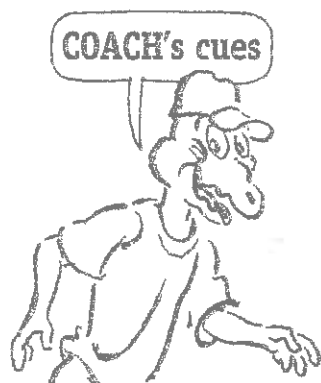
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(cont'd)

## Skill Practice 3 (10 minutes)

### Description

4 v 4—each member of the batting team hits and runs to first, three times (see the figure on page 46). The fielding team fields the ball and throws to first base. Teams rotate after each player on the batting team hits and runs three times. Discuss rules related to outs and foul balls as each situation arises (see pages 137-138).



### For Fielding

"Get in the ready position."

"Move your feet to the ball."

"Put your glove on the ground."

"Catch and cover." (Cover the ball with the ungloved hand.)

### For Throwing

"Bring the ball WAY back."

"Step with the opposite foot."

"Follow through to the target."

Also use the Coach's Cues for hitting and running to first base.

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Same as Game 1. Compare the score of Game 2 with the score of Game 1.

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## Team Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Honesty

Gather children into a group near two bases about 10 feet apart. "Can you step out of the base paths when you are running the bases? What if it's an accident and nobody saw you? Those of you who think it's OK to step out of the base paths, stand by this base. Those who think it's not OK, stand by this one." Wait for children to choose. Then ask them why they chose the base they did. "Stepping out of the base paths, even if it's an accident, is against the rules. What should you do if it happens? Those of you who think you should just keep playing, stay at this base; those of you who think you should tell the coach, go stand by that base." Wait for everyone to finish choosing. "It's important to be honest. If you step out of the base paths while you're base running, even if nobody sees it, tell me."

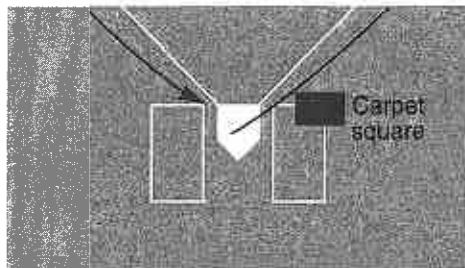
### Wrap-Up

Make summary comments about practice. Remind the children of the next practice's day and time and give them a sneak preview of that practice—fielding fly balls and line drives and hitting and running to first base.



## Variations

- Games may be played 5 v 5 or 6 v 6, depending on the number of players and the number of assistant coaches.
- Encourage better players to "charge the ball," which means to run toward the ball and catch it as soon as possible.



☞ Continue to use "cues" to help players remember key points of skill performance.

☞ Throwing the bat may be a problem for some players. Put a carpet square behind the batter's box and tell players to drop the bat on the carpet square as they follow through, then run to first base (see figure to the left).