

# Practice 4

## PURPOSE

To defend space near infield positions 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 objective is for players to be able to field fly balls and line drives, and to hit and run 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)

1. Players play catch with a partner.
2. Players jog around the bases once.

## Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Safety and rules

Gather children into a circle. "What are the easiest ways to get hurt while playing baseball [softball]?" Wait for answers (getting hit with the ball or bat, hurting your leg when sliding, slipping and falling when chasing a ball). "What's the best way to keep from getting hurt? How do we prevent these accidents from happening?" Point out that while no sport is injury free, their risks of being hurt are much reduced when they follow the rules, use proper equipment, and care about each other.

## Game 1 (10 minutes)

### Goal

The players will hit and run to first, getting there before the fielder's throw gets to the first-base player. The players will field and throw the ball, getting it to first base before the runner reaches there. The players will review the basic positions of infielders: first, second, third, shortstop, pitcher, and catcher.

### Description

4 v 4 (you can add more players, but only up to 6 v 6)—the batter hits and runs to first base; if safe, he or she scores a point (see the figure on page 46). The runner can continue running bases and can score a run if she or he crosses home plate. The fielders attempt to field and throw the ball to first base before the runner gets there. The side is retired after three points or three outs, whichever comes first. Keep score and compare it to the score of the final game. Introduce rules about a fly ball for batters and runners on base (see page 138).

# Practice 4

Coach: "What was the goal of that game, if you were playing the infield?"

Players: "The goal was to catch the ball and throw to first, ahead of the runner."

Coach: "What should you do if the ball is hit in the air?"

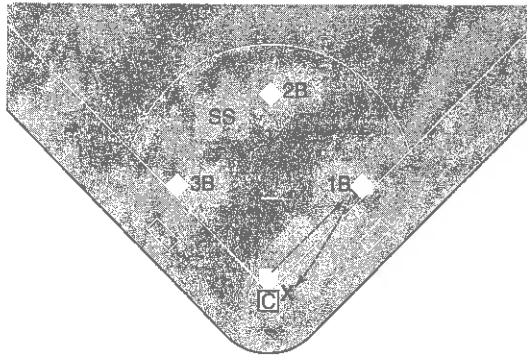
Players: "You should catch it."

Coach: "Show me how you use your glove to catch a ball in the air."

Players: *[They should show you the fingers of their gloves pointing up.]*

## Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to field a fly ball or line drive and how to make an accurate throw (see pages 127 and 121-123).
2. Practice fielding a fly ball or line drive and making an accurate throw.



### Description

Three or four players per coach—you or an assistant coach should throw fly balls or line drives to players, who are in positions in the infield. The players field the ball, then throw it in (to the player standing next to the coach). Encourage players to "call" the ball. Discuss terminology, such as *fly ball*, *line drive*, and *grounder* (see pages 116-117). Discuss the rule(s) about fly balls, and also how many outs a team gets before they switch with the team in the field (see page 138).



### For Fielding Fly Balls

"Get in the ready position."

"Move your feet to the ball."

"Watch it come in."

"Catch the ball in front of your forehead.  
Use two hands, extend your arms."

### For Fielding Line Drives

"Ball above the waist; fingers point up."

"Ball below the waist; fingers point down."

### For Throwing

"Bring the ball WAY back."

"Step with the opposite foot."

"Follow through to the target."



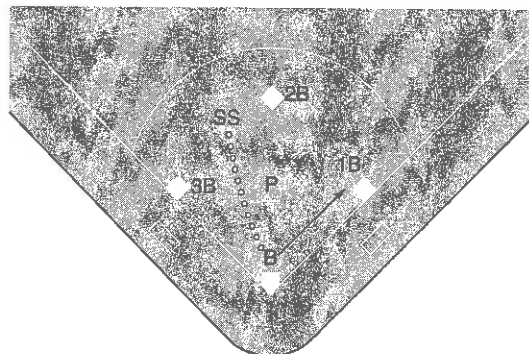
# Practice 4

(cont'd)

## Skill Practice 2 (10 minutes)

### Description

5 v 5—the fielding team has five infielders (first, second, third, shortstop, and pitcher). Have the batting team hit the ball from a tee and run to first base. If the ball is caught, the runner is out. If the ball is not caught, the runner is safe and can stay on first, then advancing to the next base on the next hit. When this situation occurs, review rules related to a fly ball when batting or running bases (page 138) and to staying in the base paths when a tag play could occur (page 138).



### COACH'S cues



For Hitting and Running

"Get in the ready position."

"Watch the ball on the batting tee."

"Step and swing fast."

"Step and drive to first base."

Also use Coach's Cues for fielding and throwing.

## Skill Practice 3 (5 minutes)

### Description

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

## Game 2 (10 minutes)

Same as Game 1. Compare the score of the second game with the score of the first game.

# Practice 4

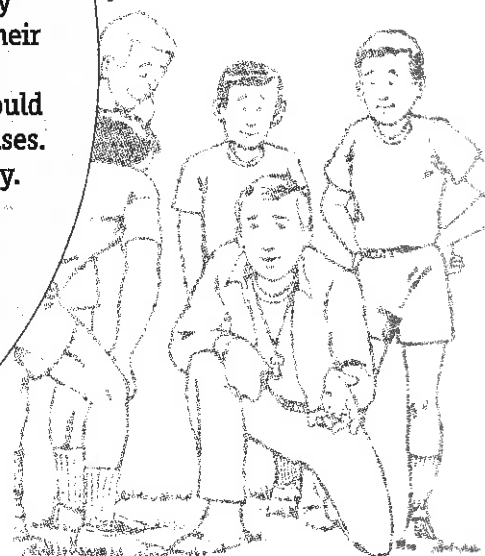
## Team Circle (5 minutes)

### Key Idea: Caring

Gather children into a circle. Stand in the middle of the group with a ball. Toss the ball to each child and give him or her a turn to toss it back to you. "I am going to throw the ball. If a throw comes to you, toss it back to me." Work around the whole circle. Talk to the children about playing and learning when they come to practice. "Who had a turn to touch the ball?" Wait for their responses. "I made sure everyone had a chance to touch the ball. Raise your hand if it felt good to be able to have a turn. How would you have felt if you did not have a turn?" Listen to their responses. "We need to share and take turns so everyone can learn and play. Sharing and taking turns shows you care."

### 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—throwing to second base to cut the lead runner and running from first to second base.



## Variations

- You may want to include practice on the pitcher's coverage of first base. This will depend on the experience of your players.
- Work with runners on rounding first, running from home to second base, and running from first to second (being in the ready position and knowing when to leave the base). They'll also need some work on listening to the base coaches, who should tell them whether to run or to stay on base.



☞ Continue to review and reinforce skills and rules that were taught in previous practice sessions.

☞ Rotate players from position to position, so that all of them get a chance to play at each position.