

Practice 6

PURPOSE

To cut the lead runner and to get from first to second base, focusing on the situation in which there are no outs, a runner is on first, and a grounder is in the infield. The objective is for players to be able to throw to second base to cut the lead runner as well as to use the proper start position to run from first to second base.

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
- ☒ A rubber band (optional)

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

1. Players throw grounders, line drives, and fly balls back and forth with a partner.
2. Players run once around the bases.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Flexibility

Bring a rubber band and show children or have them visualize one. "This rubber band is like our muscles. When I pull it, it stretches; when I let go, it pulls back to its original shape." Stretch the rubber band out and back slowly and gently. "Your muscles work this way, too. When you reach and stretch, your muscles are stretching just like the rubber band. When your body comes back, your muscles go back to their original shape. Everyone reach down to the floor with your arms slowly and then bring your arms back up." Have children repeat three times. "Your leg muscles need to stretch because we use them a lot in baseball [softball]; it makes them more flexible. When muscles are flexible, it keeps them from getting hurt and makes the muscles feel good."

Game 1 (10 minutes)

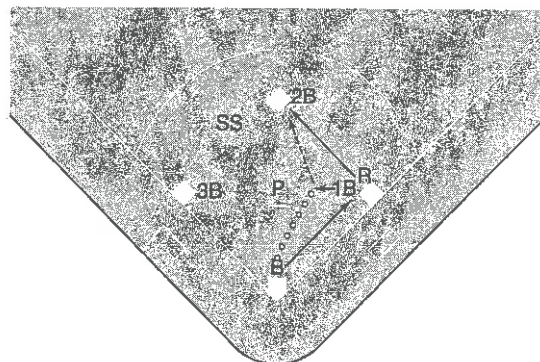
Goal

Players will run from first to second before the throw gets to second base. Players will field and throw the ball to second base before the runner gets there.

Description

5 v 5 (can add more players, if needed, up to 6 v 6)—the batting team starts with a runner on first base.

The batter hits and runs to first base; if the first-base runner is safe at



Practice 6

second, the batting team scores a point. The runners can continue running bases and can score a run if they cross home plate. The fielders attempt to field and throw the ball to second 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 Game 2. Introduce the rules related to running bases and scoring (see page 138).

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 second base, ahead of the runner."

Coach: "What happens if the infielder catches the ball before it hits the ground?"

Players: "The batter is out, and the runner cannot run to the next base."

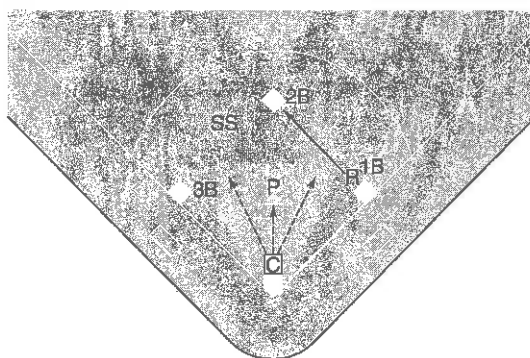


Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes)

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to cover second base on a force play and how to start and stop properly when advancing from first to second base. Demonstrate how the runner hesitates on a fly ball, leading off the base a few feet and either returning to first if the ball is caught or running to second if the ball is not caught. Show players how to get back to first base quickly. They should stay crouched with feet apart and body centered, ready to move either to second or first.
2. Practice covering second base on a force play and starting and stopping properly when advancing from first to second base.

Description

5 v 5—have the batting team run from first to second base. The fielding team should have players at first, second, third, shortstop, and pitcher. Throw them (or hit off a tee) four balls to the left side, then four balls to the right side, then two to the pitcher (mix in some fly balls and line drives). Signal the runners to run each time. After you have thrown 10 balls, the teams should switch. Continue through three rotations so that all players get to play shortstop or second base (rotate in this order: first, second, third, pitcher, shortstop). Review the rules about which bases a player can overrun and which he or she cannot (see page 138).



Be sure all players get to play shortstop and second base so they come to understand how to cover a base on a force play, as well as who should cover second base in each situation.

Help fielders differentiate when they need to throw and when they need to "flip" or toss the ball to the player covering second base.

Practice 6

(cont'd)

COACH's cues



For Advancing to Next Base

"Take off when the bat hits the ball."

"Run hard."

"Lean back with your weight on your heels."

"Gather." (Bend at the hips, knees, and ankles.)

For Stopping on a Base

"Lean back."

"Keep your weight on your heels."

"Bend your legs and ankles to absorb the force."

"Hold the base." (Keep your foot on the base at all times.)

For Covering a Base on a Force Play

"Get yourself between the ball and the base."

"Put your foot opposite your glove hand and on the outside edge of the base."

"Make a good target." (The player places his or her glove at about shoulder-level, with the glove open and facing the player throwing the ball.)

"Watch it come into the glove."

Skill Practice 2 (10 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 with the score of the first game.

Practice 6

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Responsibility

Gather children into a circle. You're in the middle of the circle with a ball and a bat. You'll try to tap the ball out of the circle with the bat. The children will have two chances to keep the ball from escaping the circle. During one turn they'll use minimal effort, and during the second they'll use their maximum effort. "I'm going to try to hit the ball out of the circle. Everyone work together to keep the ball in the circle. Pretend that you're snails that can't get to the ball fast enough." Try to get the ball out of the circle, reminding players that snails move slowly. "Okay, good. Now this time move like busy bees that fly fast and keep moving." Repeat the activity, encouraging players to be busy bees. "When you try to be like busy bees, you're being responsible to your teammates."

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 third base to cut the lead runner and running from second to third base.

Variations

For the final game, add a catcher and play a 6 v 6 game.



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

☞ Describe and review the rules as needed during practice and game play.