

Week 9

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Run three times around the bases. Play catch with a partner. After 2 or 3 minutes, partners should throw some line drives, fly balls, and grounders back and forth to each other.

Fitness Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Training and conditioning

Gather team into a group. "Do you think you should swim to get ready for our season? Raise your hand if you think jogging is a good way to prepare for baseball or softball. Jogging is a good way to keep active in the off-season or other times when you don't have practice. To improve your conditioning either before or during baseball season, it's best to participate in skills you use in baseball or softball. That is called *specificity training* because it is specific to the sport. What are some of the training skills we should be using for baseball or softball?" Listen to their responses. "Running, throwing, and hitting are the best."

Game 1 (10 minutes)

"Intrasquad"

Goals

The offense tries to score. The defense tries to prevent runs.

Description

Play an intrasquad game (for description of setup, see Game 1 in Week 7, page 165). The offense is always in a force play situation. In other words, if a runner reaches second, a runner must be on first (or be placed on first); if a runner is on third, runners must also be on first and second. The batter gets only two strikes, including foul balls. The side is retired after three runs or three outs, whichever comes first. Review rules related to force-outs (see page 117 for a diagram).

PURPOSE

To defend bases on force plays in various situations. The focus is on tactical understanding on all force play situations, executing force plays correctly, and demonstrating proper baserunning technique and proper backups.

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)

COACH's cues



For force play

- "Position between the ball and base."
- "Place foot opposite glove hand on outside edge of base."
- "Watch the ball into the glove."



Coach: Did your team always know the right play to make?

Players: (various answers)

Coach: Was your team always able to execute the right play? Where did you have problems?

Players: (With a coach/parent, let each team determine where they had the most problems or where they could use more work to execute more efficiently.)

Skill Practice (40 minutes)

Skill Practice 1

Description

- Players practice hitting. One of your pitchers throws for five batters, 10 pitches each. Players on deck should take practice swings, pretending they are the hitter. The batter third in line should work on a batting tee. One player or coach gives feedback. The other players retrieve balls and roll them back to the pitcher. Remind players about safety: Players not batting should stand 10 to 15 feet away from the batter.
- After the pitcher has thrown to five batters, she or he rotates with another pitcher (see page 166 for a diagram).

Skill Practice 2

Description

- Select a drill from a previous practice that addresses a need of the team.
- Or design a drill that will isolate a situation in which the team or individual players need practice.

COACH's point

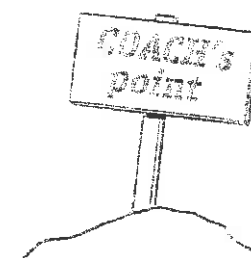



☞ If there is not an appropriate drill, create one of your own—or have the players create a drill. Guide them so they do not have too many players waiting in line and so that everyone is actively participating in the drill.

Week 9

Skill Practice 3 (pitchers and catchers; 15 minutes)

Pitchers should throw *moderate* to *full* speed. Focus on form and accuracy. Catchers should continue working on technique and should also give the pitcher feedback on control, telling him or her, for example, exactly what part of the plate the ball crossed or if the ball missed a corner.



 Pitchers and catchers can participate in one other Skill Practice, then complete Skill Practice 3.

Game 2 (10 minutes)

Repeat Game 1 to apply what has just been learned. Compare the score with the score of the first game.

Team Circle (5 minutes)

Key Idea: Responsibility

Gather team into a circle. "I want everyone to think of one thing that you, personally, can improve in your play that can make you a better player. I will go around the circle; when it's your turn, tell everyone what you think you can work on." Go to each player one at a time; assist them, if necessary. Allow them to pass their turn. "It's important to look at your own game to see where you can improve. Improving your own game is your responsibility. We can't get better as a team unless each individual tries to improve."

Wrap-Up

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



Variations

- Scrimmage another team for 2 innings, practice for 30 to 40 minutes, then return to the scrimmage game for another 2 or 3 innings. Have a run limit so the games move quickly.
- Split your team in half and play two small-sided games with another team.