

## **Build your own Baseball Practice RPBL Practice Drills**

If you need to plan a practice, chose any combination of the following drills. Allow a 5-10 minute water break/transition in between drills in your planning. Allow 10 minutes at the beginning and end of practice to welcome and wrap up the practice.

### **INFIELD**

#### **Rapid Fire Grounders – fundamentals (15 minutes)**

Equipment: Bucket of balls, a couple of cones (optional: bow net)

1. This drill works on the fundamentals. Get a bucket of baseballs and set up on the third base side of the pitcher's mound. Kneel on one knee and have quick access to the bucket.
2. Have all the players line up behind a cone that is on the outfield grass behind SS. Have player 1 step forward and get into fielding position. The moment the player gets in position, roll the first ball with some force so the player needs to take 2-4 steps forward to field the ball.
3. Player 1 fields the ball and throws the ball to a coach at 1st base. Coach puts the ball down or in a bucket. Player 1 follows around second base and to the back of the line.
4. After the throw, Player 2 steps forward and the coach rolls the ball.
5. Repeat as quickly and for as long as you have baseballs.

#### Adaptations:

- For younger kids or shorter throws, move the coach and players to the right side of the pitcher's mound and at 2nd base. Place a second cone on out field grass that player need to run around after the throw to get them out of the way.
- No second coach: set up a bow net at first base.
- Boredom: roll balls to the left, right, bouncy, or pop ups. Keep them guessing.
- Communication: Have kids get in two lines behind SS and 3B. Roll the ball between them.
- Competition: use bow net and assign points for hitting net, hitting basket, or not hitting net. You can also make it a knockout game. Basket knocks out net, net knocks out miss.
- Going 2: Have players work on throwing to second base. Add a line of kids who catch the ball while moving to second base. Add in a throw to 1st base.

#### **Square Flip Drill - The short throw can sometimes feel like the hardest. (15 minutes)**

Equipment: 4 cones and 1 baseball.

1. Set up 4 cones in a 8-10 ft square.
2. Get into groups of 4. Have each group line up at the corner. The first player should face the player to the right.
3. Baseball starts at one cone. Player 1 drops the ball, picks it up with two hands, rotates to the left, steps and underhand flips to the cone to the left (player 2). Player 1 follows the throw to the end of the line behind player 2.
4. Player 2 catches the ball, then drops it, picks it up with two hands, rotates to the left, steps and underhand flips to the cone to the left (player 3). Player 2 follows the throw to the end of the line behind player 3.
5. Players repeat this as long as you want.

#### Adaptations:

- Throws: Spread out the cones to 20-30 feet. Instead of underhand flip, they should gather, step and throw to the player to the left, then follow.
- Run multiple squares. You need at least 5 players per square. Fewer players = more reps.
- Reverse direction: As players, have players face left, catch and flip to the players to the right. You can add different kinds or flips and throws to the right.

## OUTFIELD

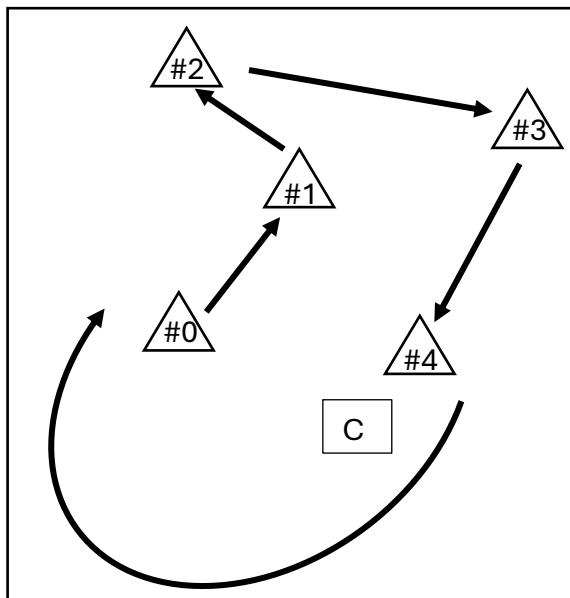
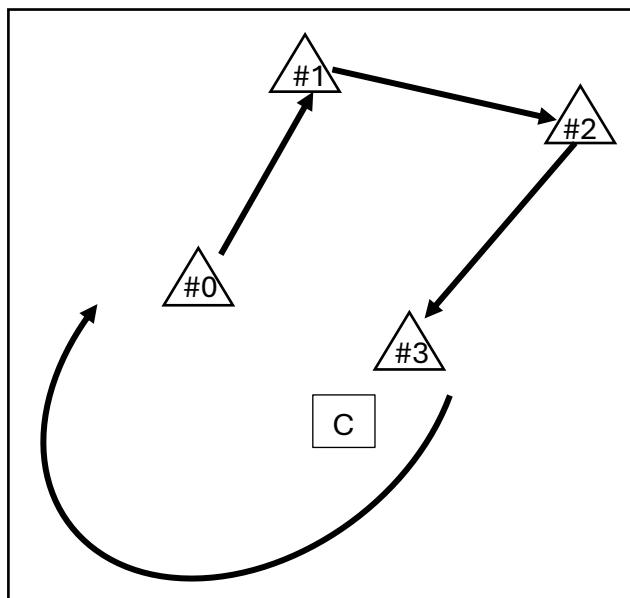
### **Diamond Drill** – working on catching the basic flyballs (15-20 minutes)

Equipment: 4 or 5 cones, bucket of balls (optional: tennis balls, whiffle balls, bow net)

1. Set up cones in a diamond formation, separated by 10-25 feet, depending on age. Players line up outside of the cone (#0) on the left. Coach is set up just below the bottom cone (#3). [See figure below left]
2. Player 1 gets in the ready position and Coach throws a flyball 2/3 of the way to the top cone (#1) of the diamond. Player 1 catches it, steps and throws to the Coach.
3. Player 1 runs around cone #1 and coach throws a ball 2/3 of the way to the cone (#2) on the right. Player 1 catches the ball and throws the ball to coach.
4. Player 1 runs around cone #2 and coach rolls a ball between cone #3 and cone #2. Player 1 collects the ball and throws to coach.
5. Player 1 runs around coach and gets back in line.

#### Adaptations:

- - Distance between cones is based on age. For younger kids, consider using whiffle balls and no gloves. You can also have some fun and have the kids try to have the whiffle balls hit their heads. As much as possible, always have the kids throw the ball to the coach, and have a grounder element.
- - Competition: Time the players. Missed throws add 2 sec, dropped balls add 1 sec, missed cones add 3 sec.
- - For more advanced players, add a cone to the left of #1 to have players track fly balls to the right and to the left. (figure below right)



**Zigzag drill** – works on opening hips to the infield when going after a ball. (15 minutes)

Equipment: Cones and baseballs (optional: bow net)

1. Set up 4 cones in a zigzag pattern (10 ft to the side and 8 ft behind). Players line up outside the cones, beside the front cone. Coach about 4 ft below the pattern.
2. Player 1 gets in a ready position, then opens up to the coach and runs to the next cone. Player 1 runs in a zigzag pattern from cone to cone, always opening to the coach at each cone. When Player 1 reaches the last cone, Coach throws a pop up to outside of the cones for the player to catch and throw to coach.
3. Once Coach catches the ball, Player 2 starts.
4. Player 1 runs around coach and gets back in line.

Adaptations:

- Space the cones according to the age group. For T-ball, make them 5 ft apart. International can do 10 ft. National can do 15 ft. American can do 20 feet. As players get older, the cones can be moved deeper to make the player run backwards more. Coaches can also add cones.
- For players scared of the ball, use tennis balls or tennis balls with or without a glove.
- For players who don't get under the ball/catch the ball off to the side, use a whiffle ball and have the player head the ball instead of catch it.
- Advanced: Add a second flyball for players to come in on near the coach.
- Competition: Start a timer on "go" and have kids run outside of the cones but always open to the coach. Timer stops when coach gets the ball. Add 2 sec for not opening to coach. Add 5 seconds for not going outside the cone. Add 4 seconds for a wild throw to coach/bow net

**Outfield throwing: Tom Emanski Drill**

(15 minutes)

Equipment: Baseballs, cones, and bow net

1. Line the player up in the outfield behind a cone.
2. Place another cone 10 ft to the side of the players.
3. Player 1 set up at cone.
4. On "go", player gets in fielding position, then coach throws a pop-up/flyball to the player.
5. Player gets behind the ball, catches the ball, then throws it towards the bow net.
6. Player goes to back of line, and the next teammate get out to the cone.
7. Repeat.

Adaptations:

- Set distance based on throwing ability of the player
- For a team that struggles to catch pop-ups, make this a grounder drill with a longer distance than Rapid Fire Grounders.
- Competition: Add scoring: 3 points – hit the net on the fly; 2 pts – hit the net, 0 pts – miss the net.
- Arms are tired: Players catch the ball, set to throw, and hold, then run the ball to the coach's bucket.

## **General Throwing:**

(15-20 minutes)

**T-Ball - Hit the [object]:** Line up the players spread out in a semi-circle around an object (a helmet works well). Make sure no players are on opposite sides of the object. Give each player a baseball. Calling each name, have the players try to hit the object by throwing the ball at the object. Cheer and give a point to each player who hits the object. After each round, have the players run to pick up the baseball and return to a different players spot. Move the object closer or farther away, as needed.

**International League – Target practice:** Set up a line of players behind a cone 30 ft from a bow net/coach.

Have a coach next to the cone give each player a ball and have them throw to the bow net/coach. Adjust distances and give points based on accuracy. Split into two teams and have the loser run while the winning team picks up the baseballs.

**National League - Relay Throwing Races:** Break the team into groups of 4 or 5. Line them up with 15-20 feet between each team and 20-40 ft between teammates. The goal is to have the ball start at one end and to make the throws to make it to the other end and back as quickly as possible. No skipping players, even on overthrows. After 2 rounds, rotate the players so players get a chance to be in the middle and on an end.

## **HITTING**

### **Tee Work – Fundamentals of hitting.**

(30 minutes)

Equipment: Hitting Tee and Bow Net or screen

1. Have an order of players to hit ready (stay organized). Have 2 players work at a time with a coach. One player is the batter and the other is on-deck. On-deck has the bat touching the ground at all times. NO PRACTICE SWINGS.
2. Set up hitting direction away from other players, cars, or other breakable objects.
3. Have batter line up front foot just behind the tee. When batter strides, the foot should land even with the tee. We want the batter to hit the ball out in front.
4. Coach should place ball on tee, point to where the ball should hit the bow net and say “pitch”.
5. Batter should load, stride, and swing, hitting the ball on a line drive.
6. Batter should reset after the swing and get ready. Coach should replace the ball and say “pitch” when ready. After 6 swings switch the batter.
7. Go through 2 rounds and get two new players.

### Adaptations:

- Staying back - Multi-stride: Have the batter pick up and stride three times quickly, hitting on the third stride.
- One handed tee work: Have the batter choke up above the handle and swing with only one hand. After 4 swings, switch hands. After using both hands separately, hit 4 balls using both hands, then switch batter.

### **Soft BP – getting the swings without the danger**

(30 minutes)

Equipment: 12 pair of balled up socks (may be unusable as socks afterwards)

1. Have a hitting order. If you want, you can have two BP going on at the same time.
2. Line up batter by back stop or any fence. One player is on-deck behind the backstop or fence
3. The rest of the players are spread out in the “field” without their gloves. Time to show off some defense!
4. Coach pitches (over- or under-hand) to the batter. Each batter gets 6 swings or good pitches. After a batter is done, call the next to get ready. Pitches can come quickly and don’t have to wait for everyone to be ready.
5. If there is time, do a second round.

### Adaptations:

- Use a tee with the socks to have more contact.
- Competition: Set up cones in the field at different distances. Batters or teams get points based on how far the sock balls travel. Zero points if the ball is caught.

## **TEAM - COMPETITIVE**

### **Tee Ball Game / 18 outs**

(30-45 minutes)

Equipment: 1-2 baseballs, hitting tee, bases.

1. The goal of this drill is to develop team defense. Players should know where the ball should go if hit to them in different situations. Split into two even teams (set this up ahead of time, if possible). Depending on the number of players, you might not field a catcher or pitcher. A coach can play catcher.
2. Each team gets 6 outs per inning, clean the bases after 3 outs. This cuts down on the transitions.
3. Coach puts ball on tee, which marks the pitch. Batter hits the ball, but must stay in a smaller batter's box to limit how the players will adjust their stance to hit. If needed, coach can control batting stance (eg., toes lined up to second base)
4. Play with the rules of the league. Players have to remain at base once ball is in infield.
5. Count either the number of bases gained or number of runs. Winning team cleans up. Losing team runs foul poles. (make sure to give the winning team a cleaning job to do.)

#### Adaptations:

- 18 outs - Coach can hit the balls. Batter stands where umpire usually stands, facing away from field. Batter runs on sound of the hit.
- 3 team game: Split into 3 teams. Have two teams fielding, one team hitting.
- Hustle game - teams are designated Home (3rd base) and Away (1st base), and have their gear on separate sides of the field. Helmets and bats must be lined up in front of the benches. Visitor team hits first. Home team in the field. Game starts with coach putting ball on the tee. After the 6th out, the hitting team needs to put on their hats and gloves, run over their base, and go to a fielding position. At the same time, the fielding team needs to run over their base (home - 3rd, Away - 1st), to their dugout, puts on their helmets, and puts their gloves and hats in a line in front of their dugout. Once the new hitting team has their helmets on and gloves lined up, the coach places the ball on the tee and they may start hitting, whether the fielding team is in position or not. [this is best for an older league]

### **Around the horn:** Break the team into groups of 4 or 5.

(15-20 minutes)

Equipment: a baseball, bases, stopwatch (phone is fine)

1. Set out bases at the distance for your league. For each team, have a player at each base and home representing Catcher, 1st baseman, 2nd baseman, and 3rd baseman. If you have teams of 5, then have 2B and SS.
2. This is a timing game. Teams are trying to throw the ball to each base in order as fast as they can. The throws are as follows: C -> 3B -> 2B -> 1B -> C -> 1B -> 2B -> 3B -> C
3. Rules: Player must tag each base in order. If there is an overthrow, the ball has to return to the base to tag.
4. Take 3 runs – average or best time.

#### Adaptations:

- For older players, change the order of the bases. C -> 2B -> 3B -> 1B -> 2B -> C -> 1B -> 3B -> C

## **BASERUNNING**

### **3 line running** - work on jump or lead.

(15 minutes)

Equipment: 6 cones

1. Place 3 cones about 5 feet apart. Have players lined up behind the cones in equal numbers. Place 3 other cones 40 feet away, mimicking basepaths.
2. Have 3 runners go at each time. Runners put left foot on the base and have coach raise his hand. Coach drops hand and runners run as fast as they can through the end cones.
3. Runner jogs back around to the end of the lines.

#### Adaptations:

- Secondary leads: Have players get a secondary lead. If the coach raises his hand, the player runs. If the coach puts his hand on his chest, the players freezes then returns to the base.

### **Running situations** – different distances of running on the basepaths

(15 minutes)

1. Runout a ground. On the word “go”, players run individually through 1<sup>st</sup> base past a cone about 20 feet past 1<sup>st</sup> base. Players should jog and get lined up beside 2<sup>nd</sup> base.
2. Scoring from 2<sup>nd</sup>: Players place left foot on 2<sup>nd</sup> base, then run a banana turn through 3<sup>rd</sup> base to home. Players line up at home.
3. Double: On the word “go”, players run a banana turn through 1<sup>st</sup> base to 2<sup>nd</sup> base. After stopping on 2<sup>nd</sup> base, players jog to line up net to 3<sup>rd</sup> base.
4. Tag-up: Place a cone 3 feet down the line from 3<sup>rd</sup> base. On the word “go”, players run to the cone, then back to 3<sup>rd</sup> base. When coach claps, players run home. Players line up at home.
5. Triple: On the word “go”, players run out a triple, running banana turns are 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. After stopping at 3<sup>rd</sup>, player jog to line up at home.
6. Home run: One the word “go” players run out a home run as fast as they can.

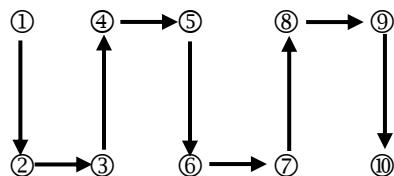
#### Adaptations:

- For tee ball, run through 1<sup>st</sup>, then run a home run.
- For advanced players, you can add rounding 1<sup>st</sup>, then 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Laundry day: Work on sliding into second on the double.

### Step Ladder: Agility drill – working on the movements of infielders

Equipment: Cones

1. Set up cones 3-4 feet apart. Make a second line 8 feet to the side.
2. Have player start in a corner. Moving sideways, fielder shuffle and do not cross their feet, then touch the cone with their glove, in proper fielding position. Moving forward, they charge, set, and touch the cone in proper fielding position. Move sideways and repeat.
3. Here is the motion (facing right)



#### Adaptations:

- Change distance based on age.
- Start with 6 cones. Move up based on age and interest.
- Roll them a grounder as they move from cone 9 to cone 10. Player fields the ball, sets, and throws to a coach or bow net.

## **PITCHING**

Pitching (using a bow screen for bullpens can be very helpful - give them 10 balls to throw, then retrieve) Pitching can be one of the most stressful and important part of the game for the National and American Leagues. As a coach, your job is to make the experience as stress free as possible – not a small feet. When working with a pitcher, do not make more than 2 recommendations per practice/session. There is so much to think about as a pitcher, and adding more items just makes it harder.

**Beginner pitcher:** Pitching is just controlled throwing. Pitchers should start with throwing as a fielder using shuffle steps or crow hops that they use in the game. Your goal is to make the connection between what they do in the field with what they will do on the mound.

**Intermediate pitcher:** once the pitcher is able to throw strikes on 75% of their pitches, you can start to work on the pitching motion. Small changes are the goal. Each pitcher throws in a certain way. You do not want to change that, unless it is obviously going to cause injury or hurts when the pitcher is throwing. With an intermediate pitcher, you can work on the leg lift, glove placement, stride, etc. Again, only make 1-2 changes. Most pitchers will need at least a month to work through those changes and make them new habits. Be patient.

International or T-Ball leagues. These drills can be adapted for you at a shorter distance. It is never too early to learn how to throw with accuracy.

### **Pitching game to the bow-screen: flat ground**

Equipment: rubber or cone, an additional cone, bow net, baseballs

1. Make sure that the pitcher is warmed up.
2. Place the pitching rubber or cone [or any object] the correct distance from the bow net on flat ground.
3. Place the additional cone 5-6 feet in line to the bow net.
4. Have the pitcher, place their (throwing) arm-side leg in front of the cone, stride towards the bow net, and throw.
5. Often, new pitchers will think they have to keep their foot on the rubber. Remind them it is just like a throw from the field. After they stride to throw, they can do anything they want – be creative.
6. Points: Beginner: 4 points in the center; 2 points hitting the net on the fly; 1 point hitting the net on a bounce; 0 points for missing the net. How many points can they get in 6 pitches? [why 6? How many pitches can be in an at-bat with the batter not swinging?] Intermediate: 4 pts in the center; 2pts hitting the net on the fly; -1 pt for everything else.
7. Do 2-3 rounds.

### **Knockout Pitching: Who can handle the pressure?**

Equipment: baseballs, Homeplate and pitching plate, bow net

1. Have everyone line up next to or behind the pitching mound. Set up the bow net at home or whatever the pitching distance is for your league.
2. Each player has a baseball. They step up to the mound and get one throw. Level 1 – in the hoop, Level 2 – in the net on the fly, Level 3 – hit the net on the bounce; Level 4 – missed the net.
3. If the player after you scores a level better, you are knocked out. If they match or do worse, you survive.
4. Continue until there is one player left.

### **Carnival games: Baseball skills competition**

Outfield Throwing: Tom Emanski's Outfield Throw

Outfield Defense: Timed ZigZag Drill

Infield Defense: Timed Turning Two

Infield Defense: Rapid Fire grounders – 5 grounders with points

Pitching: Bow Net scoring

Pitching: Hit the Tee – number of pitches to hit a ball off the tee

Pitching: Tic-Tac-Toe with 9-hole net (advance)

Pitching: Can't Teach Velo – need a radar gun

Baserunning: Speed to 1<sup>st</sup> base – timed

Baserunning: 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> – timed

Hitting: Coach Pitch – hitting to areas in the field – mark areas using cones and designate points

Bunting: Coach Pitch – Bunting to different locations – mark areas using cones and designate points

Hitting: Soft Toss/Tee HR derby – set up a homerun line using cones

Throwing: Distance and Accuracy – set up a line of cones on a foul line. The distance off the line is subtracted from the distance up the line.