

Basic Baseball Fundamentals

Batting

Place the players in a circle with plenty of room between each player with the Command Coach in the center. Other coaches should be outside the circle observing. If someone needs additional help or correction take that individual outside the circle. When corrected have them rejoin the circle. Each player should have a bat.

<u>Batting:</u>	Stance/Knuckles/Ready/Load-up/Squish/Swing/Follow Thru/Release <u>Stance:</u> Players should be facing the instructor with their feet spread apart as wide as is comfortable, weight balanced on both feet and in a straight line with the instructor. <u>Knuckles:</u> Players should have the bat in both hands with the front (knocking) knuckles lined up as close as possible.
<u>Relaxed</u>	<u>Ready:</u> Position that the batter should be in when the pitcher is looking in for signs and is Ready to pitch. In a proper stance with the knocking knuckles lined up, hands in front of the body at armpit height and the bat resting on the shoulder.
<u>Relaxed</u>	<u>Load-up:</u> Position the batter takes when the pitcher starts to wind up or on the first movement after the stretch position. When the pitcher <u>Loads</u> -up to pitch, the batter <u>Loads</u> -up to hit. Shift weight to the back foot. Pivot on the front foot, which will raise the heel slightly off the ground. Hands go back and up at least to shoulder height (Hands up). By shifting the weight to the back foot, pivoting on the front foot and moving the hands back and up, it will move the batter into an attacking position.
<u>Explode</u>	<u>Squish/Swing:</u> <u>Squish:</u> Pivot back foot (like <u>sqwishing</u> a bug with your toes) Weight remains on the back foot. <u>Swing:</u> Hands are the last things to go. Snap the head of the bat (the sweet spot) at the ball or T. On the first few swings, swing forward slightly past the body and hold this position to make sure the batter understands to stay focused on the spot where the bat and ball make contact. When you are sure that they understand the concept of keeping the head and eyes at the point of contact, have them swing with a full follow-thru. <u>Follow-Thru:</u> When you explode on the swing, the momentum of the explosion will take the bat into a follow-thru. Do not stop the swing. Let the natural finish of the swing stop the bat. <u>Reminder!</u> Continue to keep head and eyes focused on the point of contact during the follow-thru. Hold the head and eyes and the follow thru position for a count of four.

Initially this should be done by command 20-30 times at the beginning of practice. Players should also be told that they should practice the Ready/Load up/Squish-Swing/Follow Thru (in separate steps until their swing is developed) a minimum of 50 to 100 times a day on their own before practice, after or at home.

Practice Makes Perfect! Perfect Practice Makes Perfect Fundamentals.

Release:

After the follow-thru is completed, release the grip on the bat and run from under the bat. In actual batting situations (but not during this drill) when the follow thru is completed, hitters should release their grip and run from under the bat. They should not discard the bat by throwing it down. They will lose a step moving to first. This can be practiced one at a time running from the plate through first base. Ready/Load up/Squish-Swing/Follow-Thru/Release/Run On running to first be sure to incorporate the proper base running fundamentals, that way two fundamentals are practiced at the same time. This is a good time to time your players.

The single most important thing to remember in the hitting process: The pitcher will have a release point (window). Keep your head and eyes focused on the window, at the release follow the ball all the way to the point of contact with the bat and continue to keep your head and eyes focused on the point of contact until the follow-thru is totally complete.

Basic Baseball Fundamentals

Bunting

Bunting improves hitting! Learning to bunt develops timing and helps the player see the ball better. It also develops discipline to actually keep your eyes on the ball as it comes in contact with the bat. **The fundamentals of bunting, actually, should be taught before batting.**

Place the players in a circle with plenty of room between each player with the Command Coach in the center. Other coaches should be outside the circle observing. If someone needs additional help or correction take that individual outside the circle. When corrected have them rejoin the circle. Each player should have a bat.

Basic Bunt: (Used to Sacrifice or Squeeze) Priority is to get the ball on the ground to move runners already on base. Biggest mistake is running before the ball is down. If you get put out chances are you have done your job. Priority is to move the runner!

Stance and Footwork Starting in the proper batting stance:

1. Square around. The front foot goes forward and to the left (right for lefties). Pivot foot comes forward and parallel to the front foot, shoulder width apart. Stepping forward puts the batter farther up in the box creating a better chance of the bunt being placed in fair territory. Step to the left insures that the batter will not step on the plate.
2. Pivot. Pivot on the heel of the front foot and toes of the back foot. This is the best movement if waiting until the last possible moment to show bunt.

Bat and Hands

Front hand remains the same as when batting only with a looser grip. Rear hand slides up the bat approximately half way up the barrel and the bat is pinched between the thumb and first finger (the hand will look similar to holding a squirt gun). Extend arms in front of the body (elbows bent to a half extension) with the barrel of the bat at or near eye level. (Any ball above the bat, the bat should be pulled back because it will not be in the strike zone unless the suicide squeeze is on). When first learning to bunt it is better to have the bat parallel to the ground. As the bunter progresses the barrel end can be raised higher than the handle, which lowers the chance of popping the ball up. (Requires a little more skill). Knees should be slightly bent and movement up or down to the pitch should be done with the knees and not raising and lowering the bat.

Drills can be devised using the same commands as batting except when you get to the command "Squish" replace with "Step" (pause) "Step" for the square around bunt and "Pivot" for the Pivot bunt.

The game of Pepper, only substituting bunting for batting, is a great way to practice bunting. Work in groups of four with one bunting and the other three fifteen to twenty feet from the bunter and spread out a little. The bunter should try to bunt back to each player (alternating) as if trying to bunt toward third, second and first areas.

Drag Bunt: (Bunting for a Hit) Priority is the element of surprise. In the drag bunt you are moving before the bunt is down.

Stance and Footwork: Starting in the proper batting stance:

1. Right-handed. Starting in the batting stance, at the last moment, drop the right foot back, lean back and push off the right foot and be moving forward into the pitch as it is arriving to the plate. As you are moving forward lower the bat into the bunting position keeping the bat between you and the pitcher. You should be bunting the ball on the run giving you not only a running start to first base, but also a surprise element because you waited until the last second to start your move.
2. Left-handed. Leftys have a great advantage because they start a step or two closer to first. As the pitch is delivered push off the left foot as the front foot is starting toward first. As you are moving forward lower the bat into the bunting position, which in this case will actually be behind you or to your left side. Left-handers can also work on a "Slap Hit". A slap hit is not a bunt, but is similar in fundamentals. The difference is instead of tapping the ball you actually take a controlled swing, usually not as hard as normal and trying to slap it or place it through the left side of the infield.

(The slap hit is usually identified with the game of fastpitch softball, but could also, if perfected, be very effective in baseball).

Just like in hitting, the single most important thing to remember in the bunting process is: The pitcher will have a release point (window). Keep your head and eyes focused on the window and at the release follow the ball all the way to the point of contact with the bat.

Basic Baseball Fundamentals

Catching/Behind the Plate

General Philosophy

There are nine defensive positions in the field. At the younger age levels, for eight of those positions, you should try some time during the season to give every player a chance to play. Catcher is the one position that (unless you have no choice because no one wants to volunteer) only someone that wants to catch and is capable should be placed in the catching position.

Catcher attributes:

Tough. Not afraid of getting hit by a pitch (often uses body to block wild pitches) or by a foul back or occasionally getting run into.

Alert with a good understanding of basic baseball. Good arm and quick reflexes. Usually is one of your top players and can play any other position when not catching.

Team leader. Involved with every pitch and because the catcher is the only player facing the field they usually become the field general (mini-coach) yelling instructions to other players.

Catching Positions: Squat/Stance/Blocking

Squat. Pre-pitch, pitch signal position. Feet pointed straight ahead 12-18 inches apart. Sit straight down with buttocks on the heels. Back straight, glove hand wrist on top of the knee with glove hanging over the shin. Feet straight and the glove over the shin will prevent anyone from the sides from seeing the signs. Bare hand tight into the crotch and fingers used to give pitch signal to the pitcher.

Stance. Receiving the pitch position. As the pitcher starts the wind-up or stretch, the catcher gets up quickly, spreads both feet a little wider (comfortable to receive), knees bent, arms extended in front of the body with the elbows bent. Glove hand positioned at the spot that the catcher wants the pitch (target) and the free hand behind the thumb of the glove with fingers loose and fingernails pointed toward the catcher's body. With the free hand in this position, it is covered by the glove for safety, it is quicker to cover the ball after the ball hits the glove and is much better for a quick release on base stealers. It is also better for receiving, framing and holding pitches. With the free hand behind the back catchers, especially on outside corner pitches, tend to stab at the ball creating an illusion to umpires and fans that the ball was indeed outside.

Blocking. From the stance, kick feet back and drop straight down to the knees, hunch forward with the shoulders and tuck the chin on the chest. Place the glove on the ground blocking the space between the knees. If the ball is to either side, step with the closest foot to that side, forward, and slide the body over in front of the ball. It is essential when blocking that the chest stay forward. The object is not to catch the ball, but to block it and keep it in front of you and/or the plate to prevent a runner from scoring or to possibly make a subsequent play.

It is practically impossible to block from a squat position.

The biggest mistake you can make at the younger levels is allowing your catchers to receive the pitch in the Squat position. Get them up into the Stance! Make them play fundamental baseball!

Basic Baseball Fundamentals

Fielding Ground and Thrown Balls

Separate your team into two groups facing each other and approximately 30 feet apart.

Fielding a batted ball:

Ready/Set/Field/Look

Ready: Players should have their legs spread wide, but comfortable, where they can move quickly in any direction. Knees slightly bent, both hands placed on their knees and the back relatively straight. This is called the "Ready" position and all players should be in this position when the pitcher is ready to start pitching. For drills have them go to this position when you give the verbal command "Ready".

Set: Hands come off the knees, lowered toward the ground and slightly forward with the palms facing the batter. How low depends on each individual's frame. The player should be comfortable and be able to move forward, backward or to either side quickly. On the verbal command "Set" players should drop into the set position. All players should drop into this position when the pitcher starts the wind up or the first movement after the stretch. As a general rule infielders will drop slightly lower than outfielders.

Field: The player needs to drop the glove to the ground, still open toward the ball with the free hand placed palm down and ahead of the glove. Players drop into this position on the command "Field".

Look: As the ball enters the glove, the bare hand follows the ball into the glove. At the same time the player looks into the glove (follows the ball into the glove). Players do this technique on the command "Look". Have them verbally repeat the command "Look" as they look the ball into the glove.

Like all drills, this should be done with many repetitions without using a ball. Once the technique is understood and they are becoming fairly proficient, then use a ball having their partner roll the ball to them on the command "Field". The partners on the command "Ready" will be in the receiving position with the ball in hand. On the command "Set" the partner will take the ball back underhand ready to roll. On the command "Field" the partners will roll the ball to the fielder. When the fielder fields the ball he will say "Look" and will hold that position until the coach says "Ready" at which time we start again.

Remember to give them the commands "Ready" and "Set" before "Field". Each player should get 5-10 fields. Having players learn drills in this manner (all together from commands) helps to develop teamwork and discipline. Another very important part of fielding regardless of what drill you are using is to make sure that players are in front of the ball. They should line up their belly buttons with the ball. You can devise other parts to this drill by making them move side to side on your command. As they progress then have them move forward to meet the ball. Good fielders charge the ball and get in front of the ball.

The second stage to fielding is to add the Throwing fundamentals of Step/Throw/Follow Thru. The next progression is Field/Look/**Hop**/Throw/Follow Thru. The Hop replaces the Step, which gives momentum and quickness in releasing the ball.

Fielding a thrown ball and quick release:

The technique used for a cut off and throw or for a double play where you want to catch and release as quickly as possible. Normally when playing catch, you would catch the ball then Step/Throw/Follow Thru. When you need a quick release you want to take your first step with the pivot foot just prior to receiving the ball so now all you have is Throw/Follow Thru. By eliminating the step before the ball arrives, it eliminates the time it takes to do it after the ball arrives.

A good way to develop quick hands is to have players play catch without moving their feet (start out at a short distance on the knees), reach to meet the ball, pull it immediately back and return the throw with no stopping motion from initial touch to return throw. This can also be done by receiving the ball with the back of the glove instead of the pocket. That way you need two hands to control the ball.

Basic Baseball Fundamentals

Outfield Play “Fly and Ground” Balls

Basically, fly balls should be caught in front of the body with the glove and throwing hand facing the ball (fingers pointing up and thumbs 6-8 inches apart) chest to chin high, arms bent at the elbows at approximately 45 degrees.

Catching with two hands:

Although the ball is “almost” always caught with the glove, this is considered catching with two hands. The free hand immediately covers the ball after it hits the glove, thus the term “catching with two hands”. Although this is considered the best way to catch fly balls because you have a better chance of controlling it, often for kids just beginning one hand is the best because it is more natural. Once they have mastered the hand and eye coordination it takes to catch the ball, then teach them how to use the second hand (“2” hands).

On any fly ball the initial first step should always be back and eyes stay with the ball. Balls to the right, first step back should be with the right foot, left side the left foot. You are in better control of your body and watching the flight of the ball. Fielders should never try to go back by simply backpedaling. They cannot move backward as quickly and could lose their balance and fall. Fielders should always run on the balls of their feet not the heels. Running on the heels will give a distorted view of the ball because it will jar the body.

Overplaying fly balls: If there needs to be an immediate throw (play) following a catch, fielders should learn to go back farther than is needed to catch the ball so they can be moving forward into the catch. They will get the ball away quicker and with more power than standing still at the catch. This technique should not be taught until they have mastered the simple (no fly ball is simple to anyone 12 and under) task of just catching fly balls.

A good drill to use: Have four fielders in a row 10 feet apart. Have four receivers approximately 100-150 feet in a straight line with the fielders.

Back/Stop/Go/Catch (Without balls, both fielders and receivers at the same time)

Back: On the command “Back” both groups turn and run straight back with their eye on their partner until they hear Stop.

Stop: On the command “Stop” both groups stop and face each other.

Go: On command “Go” both groups run forward toward each other.

Catch: On the command “Catch” both groups simulate catching a fly ball (on the run) and Step/Hop and Throw.

This drill should be done many times both turning to the left and to the right. After a few practices have the fielders with a ball and do the same drill except on the command “Catch”, simulate catching the ball, Hop and Throw the ball to the receiver. Reverse the drill with the receivers becoming the fielders and the fielders the receivers. This drill is a progressive drill, progressing when the players are capable. No ball, with a ball, third player in the middle throwing a short fly ball and a batted (or pitching machine) fly ball.

Ground balls to the outfield should be fielded similar to an infielder if there is an immediate throw (play). If there is no immediate play, the fielder should get down on one knee, body straight to the ball, glove in the fielding position in the middle of the body on the ground, to block the ball insuring that it does not get past the fielder.

Hint!

Pitching machines are great tools for “batting” fly balls. You can place the ball consistently where you need it for fly balls and line drives. Exceptional for teaching first steps backward, fly balls at the fence, chasing line drives to the right and left and catching high pops (you can shoot the ball straight up in the air).

Basic Baseball Fundamentals

Base Running

Batter-Runner Home to First:

Immediate play at first

1. Swing the bat, follow-thru, **release the hands from the bat**, run to and through first.
2. As you are running, **peripherally see the field**. Know where the ball is.
(It is not necessary to focus on first base, first base never moves. Know where the ball is).
3. Running full speed, touch the front edge of the base with the toes of your lead foot.
4. Continue past the base at least one step in full stride, then come to a quick stop using a shuffle step **facing outward** (momentum will usually cause three to five shuffle steps to stop).

Base hit, no immediate play at first

- 1 and 2. Same as above
3. Starting, approximately half way to first, instead of continuing straight ahead begin **running in an arc** so that when first base is reached, touch the front inside corner of the base and move straight toward second.
4. Come to a stop after several steps facing the ball (how many steps depends on where the ball is and the speed of the runner).
5. Stay in this position until the ball has been successfully returned to the infield.
6. Shuffle step back towards first keeping your eye on the ball (until the ball reaches the pitcher).

Batter-Runner Home to Second and beyond: (extra base hit)

- 1 and 2 same as above.
3. Almost simultaneously with leaving the plate you **begin to arc** (round out), touching the inside front corner of the base continuing without hesitation toward second base. If going beyond second continue running in an arc.
- 4-6 Same as above.

Base Runner Lead-off Mechanics:

Pitcher winding up: (shoulders pointing to first and third)

When the ball is returned to the pitcher from the catcher, the base runners should return to the base (between pitches) so that they can look for signs from the coach. When the pitcher starts any motion to pitch (they are committed to pitch to the plate), the base runner should immediately get to a maximum leadoff (far enough where they can get back to the base safely on an attempted pick off) in a ready position (similar to the Set position in fielding) facing the pitcher, feet in line with the next base **at the back of the base**, with the weight on the right foot (so their first move on a batted ball is toward the next base). Important at third to take the lead off a step into foul territory (in case the batted ball is hit in their direction). If the ball is not hit, they should remain the maximum distance off only balanced now on both feet (if the runner on is on third, immediately when the ball passes the hitter and is not hit, move slightly into fair territory). Remain in this maximum leadoff in case the ball is over thrown to the pitcher. When the ball is returned to the pitcher, the runners return to their base, watching the ball. Runners should never turn their back to the ball when returning to base.

Pitcher in the set position: (shoulders pointing to second and home)

When the ball is returned to the pitcher from the catcher, the base runners should return to the base (between pitches) so that they can look for signs from the coach. When the pitcher starts any movement to go to the set position, runners, in the ready position, should shuffle step off the base to a maximum leadoff, facing the pitcher, with feet in line with the next base and **at the back of the base**, balanced on both feet and never taking their eyes off of the pitcher.

Basics: Any time from the start of the stretch until they pitch to the plate, the pitcher may step back off the rubber with their pivot foot (now are considered an infielder), step directly toward and throw to an occupied base or step directly to second or third base, if occupied, and fake a throw. Prior to pitching to the plate the pitcher must come to the set position (both hands together) and stop.

Runner at first base: Righthanded pitcher: the runner should focus on the pivot foot, the left knee and the left shoulder. Lefthanded pitcher: the runner should focus on the right foot (if it crosses behind the pitching rubber).

Other runners: Be sure the ball is going to the plate.

Basic Baseball Fundamentals

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Clarifications

Batter runner Home to first:

After a completed follow thru the batter should **release the hands** from the bat and run from under the bat. Taking time to discard the bat to the side will lose a step going to first. **Peripherally see the field**. To many coaches teach their players as they run to look straight ahead to the base. Bases never move, but the ball continually does and players need to know where the ball is. **A slight glance in while running to first, a slight glance in when stealing a base, and seeing the whole field when running bases or when the ball is behind them, as they are running they need to be able to focus on the base, the base coach and the fielder in position to receive a throw**. Coming to a stop as quickly as possible will put the batter-runner closer to second base. Each additional step taken overrunning first puts the batter-runner farther from second if there is a misplay. Coming to a stop **facing outward** (toward the infield) gives the batter-runner the opportunity to view the entire field for possible misplays. Do not be confused with turning toward the infield and making an attempt to go to second. The batter-runner may turn either direction when overrunning first and is not in jeopardy to be put out if no attempt toward second is made.

Running in an arc:

When looking at a baseball field from behind home plate the field appears to be in the shape of a diamond. Actually the bases and the base paths are in a square. If you are running full speed, you cannot run in a square so runners, in baseball, are allowed to establish their own base paths. You can actually encircle the base paths, **running in an arc**, as long as you touch each base in order. The only time you have to run directly to a base is when a fielder has the ball. Then you must run from where you are at the time the fielder receives the ball, directly toward the base. In running toward the base when the fielder has the ball at or near the base, the runner is given approximately three feet either side of the fielder to try to avoid the tag.

Leading Off:

Leading off at the **back of the base** instead of in the baseline has two advantages. First, if you immediately turn to your left and return to the base either standing up or sliding back head first (preferred if you have a maximum lead off) you will be sliding at the back of the base instead of straight into the base which will help in avoiding a tag. Secondly, if you are stealing or running and your first step is a slight turn on the front (pivot) foot and a cross over with your trail foot, the cross over step will put you in a straight line with the next base.

Tagging up on fly balls:

1. Runners should tag up facing the ball not facing the coach.
2. The pivot or push off foot should be on the front edge of the base (closest edge to the next base). Lean toward the base with the weight on the push off foot in a coiling action. When the fly ball is **first "touched"** by the fielder (not caught), the immediately runner pushes off the base toward the next base or the plate.
3. Runners should be taught to watch the fly ball and react on their own when to leave the base. (if a coach wants to they can reinforce when to go by stating "Go")

Philosophy:

There are four fundamentals. Batting/Bunting, Throwing, Fielding, and Running. Of the four Running is the most neglected of the four fundamentals when it comes to teaching, but only runners score so it is as important, if not the most important, of the four. How many times in a game is a runner thrown out or tagged out by a step. Don't forget to teach good running fundamentals. In a one or two run ball game, good base running fundamentals by the winning team, usually makes the difference.

Basic Baseball Fundamentals

Sliding

Place your players in a circle. If more than eight, have both an inner and outer circle. The instructor is in the center of the circle.

Sliding: When sliding a player should slide on both cheeks of the butt, one leg under the other with the knee bent and the foot out to the side. The forward leg should have a slight bend in the knee. The knee is bent slightly so that when contacting the base the knee will gradually continue to bend. If the leg is straight there could be a jar to the knee on contact. The foot is 6 inches off the ground with the toes bent upward so the cleats (heel) do not catch on the ground. Although players 12 and under cannot wear cleats this fundamental should be learned properly for developing proper techniques for the future. The initial slide is on the butt however as the slider goes down they should eventually lay back. Arms should be raised above the head and backwards with hands and fingers relaxed. It is extremely important for the slider to initially tuck their chin to the chest to prevent snapping the head back and hitting the back of the head on the ground.

Slide/Tuck/Back

Slide: From the sitting position with both feet forward, on the command "**Slide**" each player will tuck and bend a leg under, raise the forward foot six inches off the ground, slightly bent at the knee and rotate the toes upward.

Tuck: On the command "**Tuck**" the players will tuck their chin on their chest.

Back: On the command "**Back**" players will lay backward with their arms extended backwards (fingers loose and flexible).

Repeated at least 15-20 times in the drill until the slide (at least the way they end up) is perfected.

First start from a sitting position going step by step. Later start from the standing position and then from the standing position, running in place.

Hook Slide: The old hook slide (slide away from the tag in a position similar to a hurdler with the hooking foot out to the side) seems to be replaced in modern day Baseball and Softball with the slide to the side of and past the base (regular slide as above), but instead of touching the base with the hooking foot the slider touches or gains control of the base with the closest hand as you slide past it.

Headfirst Slide: This slide is on the belly with arms extended forward. Sliding headfirst is the best way to slide to get to the base the quickest. Difficult to teach, but many players learn and do it on their own. Practice works best on a rainy day in the grass!!! Mothers love this.

The headfirst slide is the best slide to return to a base on a pick off attempt. Note! If someone can slide back to the base feet first on a pick off attempt, they probably did not have a very good (maximum) lead off.

Pitcher pickoff attempt:

On a head first slide back to first or third base on a pitcher or catcher pick off attempt, the slider should slide away from the tag, to the far corner of the base touching the base with the fingertips of the right hand. Runners at first base slide toward the outfield side and third base toward the foul side. This will put the slider the farthest possible distance away from the swipe tag. At second base, slide away from the tag, depending upon which fielder takes the throw. Usually if the shortstop takes the throw, slide inside touching the base with the left hand and if the second baseman takes the throw, slide outside touching the base with the right hand.

Comment: Sliding is probably the hardest fundamental to teach, the fundamental that is worked on by coaches the least, the fundamental that players are the least proficient at and the area where the most injuries occur. Kids will practice throwing, fielding and hitting, but how many times do you recall seeing someone (on their own) practicing sliding. Sliding should be addressed at every practice at least **Slide/Tuck/Back**.

Stretching the key for life long fitness

Generally speaking, most athletes, young and old, have one thing in common. They usually are very inflexible. They spend so much time developing strength and muscle mass for the specific sport they play that they neglect stretching for flexibility. It is particularly important in the growth stages of young athletes. Many of the physical problems that athletes encounter later in life may be attributed to the lack of stretching in their younger days. Below are some exercises that will help develop muscle tone and flexibility if we expose young athletes to them they could be a key in life long fitness.

IMPORTANT: A light jog or some loosening up exercises should always precede stretching. Never stretch cold muscles. Stretching should always follow the completion of practice. Always take the opportunity to cool muscles down. Great opportunity to discuss the practice and/or to include discussions on the rules and respect for the game.

Conditioning Too often players put strenuous demands on their bodies without the proper preparation. Poor pre-game warm up is the cause of most baseball injuries. Good physical conditioning will minimize strains, muscle pulls and shin splints. A twenty to thirty minute warm up period is recommended before each game and work out. The stretching exercises described on the following pages are designed to condition the muscles most frequently used in baseball. It is imperative that these exercises are eased into and done very carefully. Your players should not bounce or over stretch, and they should not start or stop quickly. An eight count is recommended for these exercises as follows:

1-2 begin the stretch

3-4 ease into the stretch

5-6-7 reach your maximum position and hold to 8

Stretching calf muscles Done religiously, this exercise nearly eliminates the possibility of shin splints (tightness of the calf muscle that causes pain to the front of the leg.)

- Stand with feet hip-width apart, toes slightly pigeon toed with the weight on the outsides of the feet.
- Lean against a wall with feet apart (18" from the back of the wall), and with a slight stretch on the calf muscle.
- Lean forward, bending elbows just enough to slightly increase the stretch in the calf muscle. Keep heels on the ground and do not strain. **Hold for 10 seconds.** Repeat 10 times.

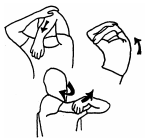
The calf muscle stretch takes only about 3 minutes and should be done three times a day during the playing season. As the muscle becomes more flexible, move the feet farther out from the wall. Used frequently, this exercise will eliminate any tightness in the calf.

From a squat position, stretch the right leg straight out to the side. Lean toward your right foot. **Hold 8 seconds** and repeat with the opposite leg. Repeat as above, toes pointing up this time.

Shoulders:

The Roll Arms outstretched to the side, palms up, start with small circular motions (10), medium circles (10), and then large circles (10). Palms down, repeat.

Circles With the arms at your sides, make large circular motions, first forward (10), then reverse (10)



Shoulder Stretch Top left. With arm overhead, hold your right elbow with your opposite hand, pull gently.

Hold 8 seconds Top right. Gently pull to the opposite side while bending at the waist. **Hold 8 seconds.** Bottom. Gently pull your elbow across your chest toward the opposite shoulder. **Hold 8 seconds.** Reverse Arms.



Back extension Lying prone, lift legs and chest off the ground at the same time. Return to a flat position. **Do 12 Reps**



Bent knee sit-ups Lay on the ground, knees slightly bent and hands behind your head. Pull up, keeping your elbows back. Use your stomach muscles, not your arms, to pull yourself up. Go back half way and don't let your head touch the ground. **25 reps**



Leg lifts Lay down, legs straight. Lift legs up to a 90-degree angle and lower them to about 3" off the ground. **Hold 8 seconds.** You must be careful if you have back problems.



Groin stretch Sit with the soles of your feet together. Gently bend forward from the hips while pushing your knees to the ground with your elbows. **Hold 8 seconds.**

Stretching the key for life long fitness

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Hip stretch With left leg out in front, grab the right ankle with your left hand and pull up to the left shoulder. Right hand and forearm should be supporting the right knee. **Hold 8 seconds;** Repeat to opposite side.



Achilles tendon stretch In a semi-kneeling position, the toes of your right foot should be even with your left knee. The heel of the bent leg can come off the ground about one inch. Lower your heel to the ground, keeping it flat while you push forward on your thigh with your chest and shoulder. **Hold 10 seconds.** Repeat, changing legs.

Forearm stretch Arms straight out in front of you, grasp your right hand at the fingertips with the left hand and pull your fingers backward to flex the wrist. **Hold for 8 seconds** and repeat with the opposite arm.



Hamstring stretch Put left foot slightly in front of the right and bend forward at the waist while keeping your right leg straight. Reach as far down as you can, hopefully, sliding your fingers under your toes. **Hold 8 seconds.** Repeat with right foot forward.

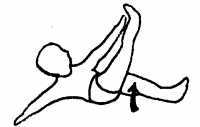
Back stretches



Sit with your left leg straight. Place right foot outside of the left knee, and left elbow outside of right knee. Rotate lower trunk to the right while looking back as far as possible. **Hold 8 seconds** and repeat to the opposite side.



Lying on your back with right leg straight, place left foot outside right knee. Drop right knee to the ground while keeping both shoulders on the ground. **Hold 8 seconds.** Repeat to opposite side.



Lay down, arms outstretched. Raise right leg, bringing right foot to your left hand. Alternate. **12 reps.**



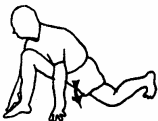
Lying down, pull left knee to chest. **Hold 8 seconds** and repeat with right knee.



Raise legs slowly over your head and move your toes toward the ground. Point your toes and stretch. It is not necessary to touch your toes on the ground. Doing so could be harmful to your neck. **Hold 10 seconds.** Relax, maintaining your position. If you can, rest the balls of your feet on the ground and flex. **Hold 10 seconds.** Come down slowly, one vertebrae at a time.



Quadriceps stretch Left leg extended out in front, sit with right leg bent, heel touching right hip. Bend backward, forcing your knee flat on the ground. **Hold for 8 seconds** switch and repeat.



Hip flexor stretch In a semi-squat position, force your hip downward. **Hold for 8 seconds.** Switch legs and repeat.

Trunk rotations: With feet spread at a comfortable distance and hands stretched straight in front of your chest, rotate upper body right and then left

Basic Baseball Fundamentals

Throwing

Separate your team into two groups facing each other and approximately 30 feet apart. Pre-draw or chalk "Ts" on the ground 30 feet across from each other and at least 8 feet apart.

Throwing:

Step/Arm and Glove/Step-Snap-Release/Follow Thru

Step: Start with each player on a T facing another player. Place the ball of the pivot foot on the top and in the middle of the T with the toes pointed straight ahead. On the command "Step" have each player turn the pivot foot sideways with the pivot foot still centered on the T.

Arm and Glove: On the command "Arm and Glove" have the players raise the throwing arm in the throwing position (arm extended back and wrist extended back) and at the same time place the glove hand approximately chest high and out in front of the body.

Step-Snap-Release: On the command "Step-Snap-Release" have the players step forward and to the left of the T 6-12 inches (right if left handed) with their non pivot foot, and simultaneously a slight snap of the glove forward and ending just off the hip, immediately followed by the players snapping their wrist to release the ball (first two fingers should be pointed straight ahead after the release).

Follow Thru: On the command "Follow Thru" have the players bring their pivot foot forward and parallel (straight across from) to the non pivot foot, a little wider than the shoulders.

Eventually the commands will be Step/Throw/Follow Thru

Note: A Normal throwing motion is not straight overhead but approximately three quarters overhead.

This drill should be done first with out using balls 20-30 times initially and maybe 5-10 times prior to every practice the first week or two (unless players techniques are not very good then continue all year if necessary). The second half of the drill will be with balls. Have one side throw by the verbal commands (Step/Throw/Follow Thru) to their partner across from them (partners should be in the receiving position). Reverse it for the return throw.

Players should throw this way every time they get loose before the start of practice. Start every practice with a controlled throwing drill. Step/Throw/Follow Thru. (Your players should hear these commands in their sleep). Perfect Practice makes Perfect Fundamentals.

Initial Baseball practices

Day 1

9:00 Expectations
9:10 Lap/Stretching Exercises/Sliding Fundamentals
9:25 Hitting Fundamentals
9:50 Throwing Fundamentals
10:15 Fielding Fundamentals
10:40 Running fundamentals/Timed home to first
10:55 Review/Summarize
10:59:59 Practice Over

Day 1

Treat like clinic
Hitting, Running
Fielding, Throwing
each 25 minutes

Day 2

8:45 Pre-practice loosening up
9:00 Stretching Exercises/Sliding Fundamentals
9:10 Hitting Fundamentals/Circle
9:30 Throwing Fundamentals
9:50 Fielding Fundamentals
10:10 Split (Infield/Outfield groups) (use pitch machine OF)
10:25 Reverse
10:40 Running fundamentals/Timed home to home
10:59:59 Practice Over

Day 2

Review/Reinforce day 1
Hitting, Running
Fielding, Throwing
each 20 minutes
new infield/outfield
(pitching machine for fly balls)

Day 3

8:45 Pre-practice loosening up
9:00 Stretching Exercises/Sliding Fundamentals
9:10 Hitting Fundamentals/Circle
Throwing Fundamentals
Fielding Fundamentals
9:30 Soft Toss
9:50 Infield/Outfield (Split 2 groups)
10:00 Infield Running w Fielders (Split groups)
10:20 Fly Balls/Line Drives (use pitching machine) in the Outfield
Pitchers/Catchers in the Infield
10:59 Practice Over

Day 3

Review (every day)*
Hitting, Fielding
Throwing
(combined) 20 minutes
new soft toss

Day 4

8:45 Pre-practice loosening up
9:00 Stretching Exercises/Sliding Fundamentals
9:10 Hitting Fundamentals/Circle
Throwing Fundamentals
Fielding Fundamentals
9:30 Soft Toss
9:50 Infield/Outfield
10:20 Running w Fielders
10:40 Fly Balls/Line Drives (use pitching machine) Outfield
Pitchers/Catchers
10:59 Practice Over