



Standard Practice Plan

- 1. Plan your practice:** Show up early with the knowledge of what field you are on and if you are practicing in the infield or outfield. Encourage players to come early and warm up with their parents. This will give you an indication of which parents will help out.
Create a team cheer: Let the players choose a team name. "1, 2, 3 go Lightning!"
Involve the parents: Start the season off with a team meeting inviting parents to participate. Keep on encouraging those that are watching to participate. Parent involvement will free up your time to correct players and set up the next drills.
Smile: Always remember to smile!
- 2. Warm-up & stretch (5 minutes)**
 - Start with a light jog. Pick a distance that is more than just the base line. Eg. Around the field or to the school and back. This gets their bodies warmed up.
 - Dynamic stretches are next. Dynamic stretches involve movement. Be creative!
 - Bird stretch: start with large arm circles in both directions. As the circles get smaller start flapping the hands. For balance get them to stand on one foot and make bird sounds.
 - Grizzly Bear stretch: hold your arms in the air and step forward with a lunge. Get the kids to make growling noises. 5 times.
 - Follow the coach: Have the players follow the bat by moving in the direction it is pointed. Call out positions and have them hold it. Eg. Throwing, batting, ready, and fielding position.
 - Add variety get the players involved later in the season. Ask them what they would like to do for the warm-up. Write down the good ones and share with other coaches!
- 3. Throwing and Receiving in Pairs (15 minutes).**
 - Standing 10 to 15 feet apart have the players throw grounders (one hop's) to each other. This is the best time to ask parents to help. They can get involved by standing behind the players to stop over throws. They can also pair up with kids that are having trouble. This will allow you to move around and make corrections.
 - **Throwing:** coach demo: proper grip, throwing stance, twist, throw.
 - Proper grip: 2, 3, or 4 fingers should be on top of the ball with the thumb underneath. The ball should be in the fingers. 4 seam grip can be worked on later.
 - Throwing stance: Glove foot forward and at 90 degrees to the target. Feet apart. Both arms at shoulder height. Elbows bent at 90 degrees. Glove hand facing you. Ball facing away from the glove.
 - Twist: the upper body now turns to face the target. The ball should be at ear height. Glove hand stays at the same height. Do not allow them to tuck the glove under the arm.
 - Throw: bend the body at the waist, move the arm forward and release.
 - **Receiving:** coach demo: feet apart, hands out in front at chest height, thumbs up, catch the ball like an egg.
 - Start all catching drills without gloves. Catch with 2 hands. Reach out for the ball and bring the hands toward the body. Use the phrase "catch the ball like an egg."
 - With gloves on show the 2 hand catch again.
 - Start out using yellow foam balls. You will build confidence by eliminating the fear of getting hit by the ball. The fear of the ball is the greatest obstacle they will face in baseball!

Throwing - Advanced (20 minutes)

- Box drill practice: 4 players per group. Each player forms the corner of a box. Start by throwing the ball to the right and then switch to the left. Later on in the season allow them to throw across the box. Allow them to choose random players. All players must call out the name of the players they are throwing to. Race 2 or 3 teams against each other in a certain direction. Switch. The first team to complete 2 or 3 cycles sits down for the win. This imitates infield play.
- Relay drill: Form 2 teams of 3 or 4 or 5. Each player is to stand in a line 10 to 20 feet from the next player. The ball starts from one end and goes to the other and back to the start. The objective is control. Making good throws and catches imitating a relay throw from the outfield. Create a game of it. The first team to throw out and back sits down for the win. A variation is to have all of the players to run in after the ball crosses back over the start line.
- Long toss: All young arms have to develop strength. Increase the distance of the throw. Throwing a longer distance will not hurt a warmed up arm. Create a competition for the longest throw. Have the players throw on command. Correct players that throw up in the air by giving them a target on the ground to aim at.

4. Fielding in Pairs (15 minutes)

- Coach demo: ready position, move to the ball, bend at the knees, hands out in front, glove hand down, throwing hand above, watch ball into glove, catch the ball like an egg, pop, throwing stance.
- Start without gloves and then with.
- Don't allow them to bend at the waist. This puts the glove between their legs and not out in front.
- Feet shuffle: Crow hop. Shuffle feet side to side with a hop. No cross overs. Head up
- Practice as a team without balls
- Fielding Drill: Roll ball straight on / Roll the ball side to side /Bounce the ball
- Start without gloves and then with gloves

Fielding-Advanced (15 minutes)

- 2 lines fielding and throwing back to the coach if you are in the outfield
- 2nd to 1st Base & SS to 3rd Base if you are in the infield
- Start without gloves and then with gloves

5. Pop-flies (15 minutes)

- Coach demo: glove in front of your body, use 2 hands, glove foot out in front.
- Start without gloves and then with gloves
- Have the players throw themselves pop flies. This will help eliminate fear and control the height of the throw.
- Progress with whiffle balls then foam balls and then the baseball.
- Key point is to have their hands down when they are moving. Keep your glove in front of the body and use 2 hands to make the catch.

6. Hitting (25 minutes)

- Coach demo: grip, stance, front heal, back heal, pivot (squish the bug), swing, contact, follow through.
- Grip: The bat should be held in the fingers. Both hand together. Knuckles aligned (door knocking knuckles)
- Stance: Feet apart, bent knees, square to the plate, bat up and not resting on shoulder, batter should be balanced.
- Front and back heal: Have the player lift the front heal and put it down. Have them lift their

back heel and put it down. The back heel comes up after the front heel goes down.

- Pivot: When the back heel is coming up the batter pivots on the back foot (squish the bug). The hips should turn forward putting a twist in the body. This is where the power comes from. The front knee should be straight and the front foot should be 90 degrees to the ball.
- Swing: The end of the bat and the hands come through first. The head of the bat follows.
- Contact: At the point of contact the bat should be out in front of the batter and square to the ball. The hands should be in a palm up palm down position. The batter should have "watched the ball hit the bat".
- Follow through: This is where the wrists rotate and the bat comes through the swing. Have the players hold the bat at the end of their swing. This builds balance and give you an opportunity to see their stance. It also gives them the resting point to release the bat.
- Practice without bats first and then with.
- Tee station: Place batting tee out in front of the plate. Keep the position of the ball high. With the tee out in front the batter learns the correct way to "hit out in front". You are trying to create a high fastball over the plate. Home Run!
- 2 Parent toss: Coaches will take a batter in a separate area and soft toss (underhand) whiffle or foam balls. Try to throw to make contact with the bat. Coaches should be there to demonstrate and correct.
- Each kid should get about 10 hits. The remainder of the players will field the hit balls.
- Rotate players through all stations (both batting & fielding)

7. Base running (10 minutes)

- Coach demo: Release the bat, quick steps & arm movement, look for the ball, eyes on the base.
- Start at Home and run to 1st Base
- Demonstrate how to drop the bat. (Don't Throw the Bat!)
- Have the players look to see where the ball is hit. Infield hits are singles. Demonstrate how to run through the base and look for overthrows. Outfield hits may be doubles. Demonstrate on how to start the turn to second.

Running - Advanced (10 minutes)

- Coach demo: review proper running technique, proper turns, touch inside corners of bases, look & listen to the coaches
- Start at home with the bat. Have the 2 coaches on field at 1st & 3rd
- Players then run to 2nd & stop
- Players then run from 2nd to home listening to the 3rd base coach
- Have the coach throwing balls into the infield, outfield and overthrows. Make the players think about what to do.

Running - Advanced (10 minutes)

- Coach demos each type of running
- Run 1 base: Divide into groups of 4. Each base demonstrates a different style. Forward / Side step / Crossover / Back pedal
- Run home to home: Use all 4 types of running, changing at each base. Time the kids. Make it a race.

8. Infield / outfield (15 minutes)

- Explain where to play each position (10) – assign a player to each
- Movement on every play. Explain if you are not moving you will get bored.
- Get the Ball. Explain: If the ball is hit to me where do I throw it.
- Go to your base. Explain: If the ball is not hit to me where do I go.
- Live ball drill (infield throws to 1st base / outfield throws to 2nd base)
- Add runners later in the season

All players must wear a helmet when holding a bat. Keep all other players behind the backstop or out in the field. All batters must have control of the bat at all times. No batter shall have a bat behind the backstop. Coaches should hold the tip of the bat until they are ready for the swing. “Loose bats make for loose teeth”

All infield drills that have you throwing to 1st should have a coach backing up the 1st baseman. If you find the players are timid on their throws replace the 1st baseman with a coach. Making good throw to first is more important the catching them.

Encourage the players to make eye contact with the receiver of the throw. Have them call out their name. This will eliminate a few black eyes (including coaches) and will help them make friends.

Some kids have a higher energy level than others. For those players extend the distance of your throws. I have never met a kid that can talk when they are breathing heavy. For the shy players be gentle. Concentrate on building confidence before skill.

A great game to keep the players occupied is a game of hand ball. Have the players form a circle with their feet touching. With gloves off have a player start by rolling the ball across the circle. Objective: To block the ball but not catch it. Keep the ball moving with a forward hand motion. At any time the ball passes through the legs of a player they are removed from the circle and the circle tightens. Form 2 circles and have the removed players switch circles. They will play this all day.