

# DRILL SUGGESTIONS

## Throwing and Catching

**Drill 1: 4 seam grip** - With players gathered around, the coaches will demonstrate how to correctly grip and throw and catch a ball. The proper way to grip and throw a baseball is through using a 4 seam grip on the baseball.

Show two-finger and three-finger grips (Three finger grip includes the ring finger along with the index and middle fingers). Index finger on the top of the ball, thumb on the bottom of the ball, middle finger on the top of the ball. The spacing between fingers should be about the size of a finger. Each player grabs a ball off of the ground to show the coach the four-seam grip. Each player will demonstrate to the coach five times. Image example of four seam grip below.



**Drill 2: 2 Hand Target Catching** - Each player will line up across from a partner. Each pair will have a baseball to throw between them. Coaches will make sure each player is using correct form and gripping the ball correctly.

When playing catch, the thrower should not release the ball until the catcher is in the 2 Hand Target Catching Position. The position is defined as when the player receiving the ball has both arms extended straight out from their body with a little flex in the elbow. Hands straight up, with thumbs toward each other, once the thrower sees this, they may deliver the ball.



## Fielding

**Drill 1: Simulated ground balls** - With players gathered around, coaches will demonstrate how to properly field a ground ball and catch a pop fly. Coaches should provide specific things to remember such as keeping their eyes on the ball and staying low to the ground. Each player will have a partner that will line up across from them. They will take turns rolling ground balls to each other to practice fielding.

**Drill 2: Fielding at a position** - On a baseball field, or a created baseball field, separate your team into 4 equal groups. Have each group line up at a position on the field. Roll or hit ground balls to each player at each spot. Once each player has fielded a ball twice at a position, have the groups rotate to the next position until each group has fielded at each position in the infield. This will make them better overall fielders while giving them a chance to practice fielding the ball at different angles. Have them throw the ball back to a coach after fielding the ball.

**Drill 3: Fielding Back Handed** - Split your team into small groups and roll or hit the baseball to their left or right side where they have to run to get it. Have them focus on making a play using their backhand, emphasizing that the ball will not always be hit right to them and they will have to learn to field the ball on the run with their glove at odd angles.

**Video example to more ground ball fielding tips** - <https://youtu.be/oG6gQe2gXUk>

**Drill 4: Pop Flys**- Coaches will have players line up in small groups while tossing a pop fly to the player in front of the line. Toss the ball high enough to challenge each player's skill level. Players should catch the ball with two hands, having their throwing hand assist their glove in the process of the catch.

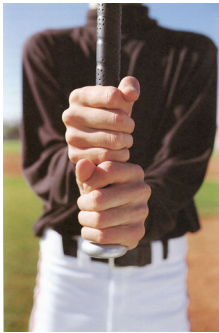
**Drill 5: Pop Flys on the run**- Keep the players in their same small groups from the pop fly drill above. This time giving the players a chance to work on tracking the ball on the run by pointing to left or right, and having the player run that way. Focus on them making their first step back with a proper dropstep, keeping their eye on the ball on the run, and getting under the ball ready to catch it once they have tracked it down.

**Video example for Pop flys on the run** - <https://youtu.be/qvwkdxepqTk>

**Drill 6: Infield Practice** - If you feel your team is ready, the drills listed above from throwing, catching, and fielding can all be combined into one big infield practice. Placing your players at their positions they will play in the game, you will hit the baseball to each position at least one time through each position. When the outfielders field or catch the ball, have them throw to the “cut off man.” The cut off man is the 2nd baseman or Shortstop depending on which side of the field the ball was hit. The cut off man needs to be a couple steps into the outfield ready to receive the throw from the outfielder and make a throw to a base themselves after receiving the throw from the outfielder. Have the infielders focus on making a strong throw to first base.

# Hitting

**Drill 1: Grip and Stance** - With players gathered around, coaches will demonstrate how to swing a bat correctly. Like with fielding, coaches should provide key things to remember such as keeping your eye on the ball and stepping towards the pitching mound when swinging. Have each player get into their batting stance and grip the bat like they are ready to hit the ball. Each batting stance will be different, but an athletic stance with feet about shoulder width apart is what you're looking for. Their grip on the bat should have their knuckles from each hand lined up with each other. Below are pictures of a good example of a strong batting stance and what their hands should look like on the bat.



**Drill 2: Dry Swings** - Players will practice swinging with a bat in hand. This is a time for the coaches to correct anything they see the players doing incorrectly. Split your team into small groups. Each group is supervised by a coach or adult. The players will be about 10 to 12 feet away from each other. They will place their fielding glove on the ground and use it as home plate. The coach will have each player take a swing on command and work with them to correct. Have them take about 10 swings each.

**Drill 3: Soft Toss/Front Toss** - After coaches are satisfied with the previous drill, players will begin hitting the baseball using the soft toss/front toss drill. This is a great drill to help kids focus on their fundamentals while making solid contact with the baseball.

- 1) Holding the ball underhanded, show the hitter the ball.
- 2) Drop your hand with the ball in it down toward the ground and pause for about one or two full seconds. (At that point, the hitter should "load up," cocking his or her hips, hands and elbows.)
- 3) Softly toss the ball to the hitter, so that it has a slight arc up and then down. Aim for

his or her back hip, or a different spot if desired and the hitter hits the ball into the fence. Repeat with the remaining baseball.

Front Toss - Repeat the process used from Soft Toss, except now tossing to the hitter from 10-15 feet directly in front of him or her. Make sure to use an L screen to toss from behind to prevent any balls being batted back at you.



**Video example for Soft Toss and Front Toss - <https://youtu.be/OqdXA9bNkMA>**

**Drill 4: Batting Practice** - The next step up from soft toss and front toss will be batting practice where batters will simulate seeing live pitching. Using a L screen, throw balls into the hitter's strike zone at an appropriate angle and speed for each player's skill level. Use batting practice to focus on each kid's individual weaknesses. For example, If a kid has trouble hitting the ball to the opposite field, have them try to hit each pitch to the opposite field.

## Base Running

**Drill 1: First Base** - With players gathered around, coaches will teach the rules of base running to the team and how to effectively run the bases. Have each player run to first base from the batter's box which they will bat from in the game. Teach them to run through first base and to not slow down or stop when approaching first base. Make sure they are running through the base and turning to the right side of the base to stay out of the field of play.

**Drill 2: Base to Base** - Players will practice running from base to base. Starting at first base, coaches should teach players how to properly run from base to base. Players should be taking a rounded angle towards and through the base if they are going to be advancing two or more bases. They should be running in a straight line to the base if they are only advancing one base.

**Drill 3: Sliding** - Players will practice sliding into bases by sliding into a base with a short running start from about 15 to 20 feet. Make sure they are sliding with one leg out to reach the base with the other leg tucked to their body. Remind the players that sliding is only necessary on close plays, to not slide head first, and to keep their hands out of the way of the fielder they may be sliding near.

Video example for sliding technique - [https://youtu.be/e\\_q6AWdgabQ](https://youtu.be/e_q6AWdgabQ)

## **PRACTICE TIPS**

1. Always be supportive and encouraging. Make sure they understand that mistakes will happen a lot in this game and it is ok to mess up.
2. Showing excitement after a player succeeds is positive reinforcement that could increase a player's love for the game.
3. Emphasizing teamwork is important to instill in someone at a young age. This is a lesson they can use the rest of their lives.
4. Always have some sort of fun activity or game involved in practices to keep the players' attention.
5. Make sure the players understand that this is a game and the main objective should be to have FUN.