

STANLEY BOYD



YOUTH BASEBALL DEFENSIVE DRILLS REFERENCE GUIDE 2026

8U • 10U • 12U • 14U

Station substitution drills for use in practice plans

8U	10U	12U	14U
7 Drills	8 Drills	9 Drills	10 Drills
Glove basics & body awareness	Fielding mechanics & accuracy	Advanced footwork & team defense	Elite range & defensive IQ

Use these drills to substitute into any defensive station slot as needed.

★ = Drill already scheduled in the 6-week practice plan

8U YOUTH BASEBALL DEFENSIVE DRILLS

Focus: Glove basics, body awareness, and making defense fun

Station Substitution Guide | Youth Baseball Practice Plans

LEVEL-WIDE COACHING POINTS

- ✓ At 8U, defense is about getting comfortable with the ball — fear of the ball is the #1 obstacle to overcome.
- ✓ Use soft balls, foam balls, or tennis balls for all drills to eliminate fear and build confidence.
- ✓ Keep explanations simple: Get in front of the ball, use two hands, throw to first. That is enough for this age.
- ✓ Every good play — even a partial one — deserves loud praise. Build the habit of trying hard in the field.
- ✓ Positions do not matter yet. Let every player try every position. Specialization at 8U kills development.

DRILLS (34 total) — Each drill fits within a single 9-minute station slot

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
1	★ Athletic Ready Position	Feet shoulder-width, knees bent, weight on balls of feet, hands in front. Coach rolls grounders — players must be in ready position before each one.	Feet shoulder-width, knees bent, weight on the balls of the feet — not the heels. Hands out in front, glove open. Cue: 'Ready position before EVERY pitch.' Roll grounders at different speeds and only to players who are in the correct position. Reinforce the habit of getting set before each rep.	Baseballs
2	★ Two-Hand Grounders	Coach rolls medium-speed grounders. Player charges slightly, gets low, fields with glove on ground and bare hand covering on top. Field 8 in a row.	Glove on the ground first — get there early. Bare hand comes down on top to secure the ball after the glove makes contact. Cue: 'Glove down, hand on top.' Charge slightly — don't wait for the ball to come to you. If the player bobbles, praise the effort and reset.	Baseballs
3	★ Overhand Throw to First	After fielding a grounder, player steps toward first base and throws to coach standing there. Emphasize stepping with opposite foot and throwing overhand.	Step toward the target with the opposite foot before throwing — right-handed thrower steps with the left foot. Throw overhand — not sidearm, not underhand. Cue: 'Step toward your target, throw overhand.' Even if the throw is off-target, praise the mechanics if they were correct.	Baseballs
4	★ Pop Fly Practice	Coach tosses ball 10–15 ft in the air. Player gets under it, calls 'I got it!', and catches with two hands. Move feet early — don't wait for the ball.	Move feet first — get under the ball before it comes down. Call 'I got it!' every single time. Two hands — glove catches, bare hand covers on top. Cue: 'Move your feet first, call it, then catch it.' Fear of the ball is the biggest obstacle for 8U outfielders — use softer balls if needed.	Baseballs


#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
5	★ Shuffle & Field Grounders	Coach points left or right — player shuffles 3 steps and fields a rolled grounder. Stay low the whole time. Don't cross feet when shuffling.	Shuffle left or right without crossing the feet. Stay low the entire time — do not stand up between the signal and fielding the ball. Cue: 'Shuffle... stay low... field.' If players cross their feet, slow the drill down and practice the shuffle movement without a ball first.	Baseballs
6	★ Alligator Hands Drill	Field grounders using the 'alligator' method: glove is the bottom jaw on the ground, bare hand is the top jaw coming down to secure the ball. Slow rolls.	Glove is the bottom jaw — it stays on the ground until the ball arrives. Bare hand is the top jaw — it snaps down on top of the ball to secure it. Cue: 'Alligator — bottom jaw first, top jaw snaps down.' Use slow rolls so players can focus on the hand mechanics, not the speed of the ball.	Baseballs
7	★ Field, Pivot & Throw	Coach rolls a grounder to the player's glove side. Player fields it, pivots feet toward first base, and makes an overhand throw to a coach at first (~30 ft).	After fielding, pivot the feet toward first base before throwing — don't throw across the body without pivoting. Step toward first, then throw overhand. Cue: 'Field... pivot feet... step and throw.' At 30 ft, accuracy matters more than arm strength. Praise accurate throws loudly.	Baseballs
8	★ Base Running — Run Through First	Coach hits or rolls a ground ball. Player runs hard through first base, touching the inside corner. Don't slow down before the bag — burst through it.	Run through first base — do not slow down before the bag. Touch the inside corner of the base, not the top. Burst through the bag and look right to see where the ball went. Cue: 'Run hard through the bag — don't slow down.' Racing to first with full effort builds the habit of hustle.	Baseballs
9	★ Charging Slow Rollers	Coach rolls a slow grounder in front of the plate area. Player charges hard, fields on the run with glove down, and tosses to coach at first. Keep feet moving!	Charge hard — urgency is the key. Field on the run with the glove down, bare hand ready to cover. Toss to coach at first with a short arm throw — no wind-up. Cue: 'Charge hard, keep moving, quick toss.' Keep feet moving throughout — never stop moving to field a slow roller.	Baseballs
10	★ Fly Ball Drop Step	Coach points left or right, then tosses a fly ball over the player's shoulder. Player drop-steps in that direction and runs to make the catch. No backpedaling.	Drop step: open the hips in the direction the coach points and run — do not backpedal. The first step is a crossover step in the indicated direction. Cue: 'Drop step — turn and run.' No backpedaling — it is slower and causes players to trip. The drop step is the foundation of all outfield work.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
11	★ Catch & Throw Sequence	Coach hits a grounder or fly ball. Player fields it cleanly, resets their feet, and throws to a coach at a base. Full catch-to-throw sequence, no shortcuts.	Full sequence, no shortcuts: field → reset feet → step → throw. No throwing off the catch without resetting. Cue: 'Field it clean, set your feet, then throw.' At 8U, resetting the feet before throwing dramatically improves accuracy. Praise the sequence over the result.	Baseballs
1 2	★ Simple Situational Play	No runners on base: player fields the ball and throws to first. Runner on first, ground ball: player fields and throws to second for the force. Walk through both.	Walk through both scenarios before running at game speed. No runners: always throw to first. Runner on first: force at second — throw to the bag, not to the player standing near it. Cue: 'Know the play before the ball is hit.' Quiz players on the correct play before each rep.	Baseballs
1 3	★ Ground Ball Gauntlet	Coach hits 6 grounders in a row to the player — mix of left, right, and straight-on. Player fields as many cleanly as possible. Count their streak. Beat your score!	Count the streak out loud — 1, 2, 3... Players are competing against their own personal best. Mix directions: straight at them, to the glove side, to the throwing side. Cue after each clean field: 'That's 2 — keep going!' An error resets the count. This creates competitive focus.	Baseballs
1 4	★ Fly Ball + Communication	Two players at a time. Coach hits a fly ball between them. Both must communicate — louder player calls 'mine!' and takes it. Other player backs up.	Both players must communicate — neither can stand still. Louder player calls 'mine!' and takes the ball; the other immediately moves to back up. Cue: 'Call it early and call it loud — then go catch it.' No silent catches at any age. If neither calls it, both players do 5 jumping jacks.	Baseballs
1 5	★ Live Infield Situations	Coach hits to different infield spots with a baserunner. Fielders make the play — field it, decide where to throw, and execute. Walk through any confusion right away.	Live situations train decision-making — the most important defensive skill at 8U. After each play, ask: 'Why did you throw there?' Walk through any confusion immediately. Cue: 'Field it, decide, throw.' Don't let mistakes pile up without a quick explanation. Keep the pace moving.	Baseballs
1 6	★ Full Team Defense Game	Mini live defense game: coach hits to random positions, a baserunner takes off. Team earns a point for every clean defensive play. Coaches celebrate the small wins.	Team earns a point for every clean defensive play: good field, good throw, good catch all count. Coaches celebrate every single point loudly. Cue: 'That's a point! Good play!' The team competition makes every player invested in every play. This is the most game-like drill in the plan.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
1 7	★ Slow Roller — Barehand or Charge	Coach pushes a very slow grounder toward third base or first. Player charges aggressively, decides barehand or glove based on speed, and fires to first. Urgency is the key — don't wait for the ball.	Charge aggressively — hesitation is the enemy of this play. Barehand very slow rollers, use the glove on anything moving faster. Quick, short arm throw to first — no wind-up. Cue: 'Charge hard, decide fast, quick release.' The decision of barehand vs. glove must be made on the run.	Baseballs
1 8	★ Backhand Grounders — Reps	Dedicated backhand station. Coach rolls to the player's throwing-hand side. Player opens the glove, extends, fields out in front of the body, pivots, and throws. 10 backhand reps each.	Open the glove (rotate it) so the webbing faces the ball. Extend the glove out in front of the body — don't reach behind the foot. After fielding, pivot and throw. Cue: 'Open the glove, extend, pivot, throw.' 10 reps each. The backhand is the hardest ground ball — reps are what fix it.	Baseballs
1 9	★ Fly Ball — Comm & Positioning	Two players side by side in the outfield. Coach hits a fly ball between them. Both must move AND communicate. The player who calls it takes it; the other immediately moves to back up. Rotate pairs.	Both players move on every ball hit — no standing still. The player who calls it takes it; the other immediately turns and sprints to back up behind the catch. Cue: 'Move first, call second, back up third.' Rotate pairs so every player experiences both roles.	Baseballs
2 0	★ Baserunning — First to Third	Player starts at first base. Coach hits a ball to the outfield — player reads the ball, rounds second with a good turn, and decides to go to third or hold. Coach gives feedback after every rep on the read and the turn quality.	Read the ball off the bat first — a ball hit to the outfield with no one on is a go-read. Round second with a good turn: hit the inside corner of second base and lean toward third. Cue: 'Read it, run hard, good turn.' Feedback after every rep: 'Good read' or 'Should have gone — what did you see?'	Baseballs
2 1	★ Position Showcase	Each player plays their best or preferred position. Coach hits them 6 balls — mix of grounders and fly balls. Their job: make every play look routine. No panic, just confident execution.	No panic — every play should look routine and confident. Confident execution means getting in position early, calling the ball, and making a clean play. Cue: 'Make it look easy.' This builds confidence in their preferred position. After 6 balls, give one specific genuine compliment about their defensive execution.	Baseballs
2 2	★ Full Relay — OF to IF to Home	Outfielder catches or fields, throws to cutoff in shallow outfield, cutoff relays home. Full team coordination. Rotate all players through every role. Emphasize communication on every single throw.	Communication on every single throw: outfielder calls 'relay!' before throwing to the cutoff. Cutoff raises both hands as a target. Cutoff catches, pivots with momentum, relays home. Cue: 'Call before you throw — give your target a heads-up.' Rotate all players through all roles.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
2 3	★ Season Best Grounders — Personal Record	Coach hits 10 grounders to each player: forehand, backhand, straight-on, slow roller, and hard-hit mix. Player counts their clean fields. Try to beat their personal best from any previous week.	Count clean fields only — a bobble that results in a dropped ball is 0. Track and announce each player's personal best. Cue: 'Can you beat your best?' The personal record challenge creates individual accountability without negative team comparison. Celebrate every new personal record loudly.	Baseballs
2 4	★ Live Game Situation — Final Inning	Full live defense with baserunners and a batter. Coach creates a specific scenario: bottom of the last inning, one run game. Team must execute. Every player has a role. Coaches celebrate every play, correct nothing in the moment — let them play.	Let them play — correct nothing during this drill. Coaches celebrate every successful play, every communication, every backup. After the inning, brief debrief: what did we do well? Cue during the drill: 'Play your game — you've got this.' At 8U, the last memory of the season should be them playing with confidence.	Baseballs
2 5	Bucket Toss Accuracy Drill	Place a bucket or large cone 20 ft from the player. Player fields a rolled grounder and tries to throw the ball into the bucket. Count how many go in out of 10 attempts. Teams compete to see who can fill the bucket fastest.	Step toward the target before throwing. Aim small — the bucket is smaller than a base, so throwing at a bucket improves accuracy more than throwing at a base. Celebrate every bucket hit. This drill makes throwing accuracy fun and competitive without pressure.	Bucket, Cones, Baseballs
2 6	Rollout & Scoop	Coach rolls a soft ball slowly toward the player from 15 ft. Player runs forward, bends down, and scoops it up with two hands — glove on the ground, bare hand on top. No throwing needed — just the field. 10 reps.	Get in front of the ball — do not reach to the side. Bend the knees, not the waist. Glove touches the ground first, bare hand comes down on top. Cue: 'Bend your knees, get in front.' This is a pure fielding mechanics drill — no throw means players can focus entirely on the catch.	Baseballs
2 7	Partner Rolling	Two players 15–20 ft apart. They roll the ball back and forth to each other along the ground. Player fields with two hands and rolls it back. No throwing — purely ground ball fielding. 5 minutes continuous.	Stay low when the ball is coming. Get the glove to the ground before the ball arrives. Roll it back gently and accurately — not hard. Cue: 'Low early — glove down before the ball gets there.' Partner rolling removes the fear of a hard-hit ball and lets players practice the fielding position repeatedly.	Baseballs
2 8	Simon Says Defense	Coach plays Simon Says with defensive positions: Simon says get in ready position... Simon says field a grounder (mime it)... Simon says throw to first (mime it). Mix in non-Simon commands. Builds muscle memory through play.	Every movement should be done with full effort even though it is mimed. Ready position: knees bent, hands out front, weight forward. Repetition of correct form builds habit even without a ball. The game element keeps energy high while the mime builds body memory.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
2 9	Traffic Cone Slalom	Set up 5 cones in a line, 5 ft apart. Player shuffles laterally through the cones — staying low, not crossing feet, keeping the glove in front. After clearing all 5 cones, coach rolls a ball and the player fields it.	Stay low through the whole slalom — do not pop up between cones. Shuffle, do not run (feet should not cross). After the last cone, get into fielding position immediately. Cue: 'Low... low... low... now field.' The slalom builds the lateral footwork that makes range possible.	Cones, Baseballs
3 0	Underhand Toss Circle	Players form a small circle 10 ft apart. They toss the ball underhand around the circle — each player catches and tosses to the next. After 1 full lap, reverse direction. Count how many consecutive catches the circle makes without a drop.	Toss it right at the partner's chest — not too high, not at their feet. Catch with two hands. Keep the circle tight so the tosses are easy. Cue: 'Chest-high, two hands.' The consecutive catch challenge makes every player responsible for the team's success.	Baseballs
3 1	Ready or Not Drill	Players spread out in the field in random positions. Coach hits or rolls a ball anywhere on the field. Whoever is closest must field it and throw to first. Everyone else must sprint to back up the play.	Defense is a team sport. When the ball is hit, every player has a job — even if it is not hit to them. A player standing still during a live ball is in the wrong spot. Everyone moves, every pitch. Cue: 'Closest player fields, everyone else backs up — GO!'	Baseballs
3 2	High-Five Catch	Coach tosses easy fly balls from 10 ft to each player — ball goes to various heights but nothing too high. Player must catch the ball and immediately high-five the coach after the catch. Creates a positive, fun reaction to making a catch.	Catch first, celebrate second. The high-five creates a positive association with catching fly balls — many 8U players are nervous about balls coming toward their face. Gradually increase the height as confidence builds. Never skip the high-five — the celebration is the point.	Baseballs
3 3	Grounder Line Drill	Players line up at shortstop. Coach rolls grounders one at a time. Player fields the grounder, holds it up to show the coach, and jogs to the back of the line. Each player gets 3–4 reps per rotation.	Stay low until the ball is in the glove. Show the ball to the coach after every field — this reinforces securing the ball before doing anything else. Cue: 'Low... field... show it.' The 'show it' step prevents 8U players from bobbling the ball and immediately trying to throw.	Baseballs
3 4	Tag the Cone	Set up a cone at each base. Coach hits or rolls a ball to the field. Player fields it and must run to tag any cone (base) before a designated time runs out. Other players act as runners.	This teaches the concept of tagging a base without requiring a perfect throw. Players learn: field the ball, get to a base, tag it. Introduces force-out logic in a physical, easy-to-understand way. Cue: 'Field it, tag a base — go!' Keep the time limit short to create urgency.	Cones, Baseballs

 **Station Tip:** Substitute any of these drills into a defensive station slot as needed. Rotate 3–4 players through at a time while others continue at standard stations.

10U YOUTH BASEBALL DEFENSIVE DRILLS

Focus: Fielding mechanics, throwing accuracy, and basic team defense

Station Substitution Guide | Youth Baseball Practice Plans

LEVEL-WIDE COACHING POINTS

- ✓ The fundamentals of fielding are built at 10U — proper footwork and glove mechanics should become automatic by the end of the season.
- ✓ Throwing accuracy matters more than arm strength at this level. A player who can throw strikes will always be valuable.
- ✓ Introduce the concept of backing up bases — every player should know where to go when the ball is hit anywhere.
- ✓ Communication starts here: calling fly balls, calling off teammates, and directing the play verbally.
- ✓ Repetition is the teacher. Drills should be high-volume and fast-paced — more reps in less time equals faster development.

DRILLS (34 total) — Each drill fits within a single 9-minute station slot

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
1	★ Infield Ready Position & First Step	Feet wide, knees bent, weight on balls of feet. Coach hits a ball — player explodes with a quick first step toward the ball before shuffling. The first step matters most. 10 reps each.	The first step is the most important step in fielding — it determines range. Weight on the balls of the feet so the first step is explosive. Cue: 'Explode on the first step — go toward the ball.' Watch for flat-footed players — they are always late. 10 reps: forehand and backhand first steps equally.	Baseballs
2	★ Forehand & Backhand Grounders	Coach alternates rolling to the player's forehand (glove) side and backhand (throwing) side. Backhand: rotate glove, field out in front, secure with bare hand. 5 forehand + 5 backhand each.	Forehand: glove on the ground, bare hand covers. Backhand: rotate the glove so webbing faces the ball, extend out in front of the body, secure with bare hand. Cue for backhand: 'Open the glove, extend out front.' Alternate without warning so players stay ready for either direction.	Baseballs
3	★ Field, Crow-hop & Throw to First	Coach hits a grounder at medium speed. Player fields it, executes a crow-hop (skip-step toward target), and throws to a coach at first (~45 ft). Crow-hop builds arm strength and accuracy.	Crow-hop sequence: field the ball, small skip-step with the back foot landing toward the target, drive off and throw. The crow-hop adds momentum and arm strength to the throw. Cue: 'Field... skip... throw.' At 45 ft, the crow-hop is the difference between an accurate throw and an inaccurate one.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
4	★ Outfield Drop Step + Catch	Coach points left or right. Player opens hips and drop-steps — leading with the back foot to open up to the ball. Coach lofts a fly ball over the shoulder. No backpedaling — turn and run.	Open the hips and turn — do not backpedal. The drop step leads with the back foot in the direction of the ball, opening the hips to run. Cue: 'Drop step — turn and run, don't backpedal.' Backpedaling causes players to watch the ball instead of running to where it will land.	Baseballs
5	★ Force Out — Shortstop to Second	Runner on first, grounder to shortstop. SS fields and throws to second for the force out. Second baseman covers the bag, catches the throw, and holds. Walk through footwork on both ends. Rotate players between SS and 2B.	Shortstop: field, plant toward second, crow-hop, throw chest-high to the bag. Second baseman: straddle the bag, catch the throw, hold the position. Walk through the footwork on both ends before running at speed. Cue: 'Field it, get to the bag, throw to the bag.' Rotate players between SS and 2B.	Baseballs
6	★ Charging & Barehanding	Coach rolls a very slow grounder toward the third base line. Player charges hard, barehands the ball (or fields with glove), and makes a quick throw to first. Teaches urgency and fielding on the run.	Charge hard — no hesitation. Decision on barehand vs. glove must happen on the run: very slow roller → barehand; anything with pace → glove. Quick short-arm throw to first — no wind-up. Cue: 'Charge hard, decide fast, quick release.' The charging mentality prevents the bounce that costs an out.	Baseballs
7	★ Cutoff & Relay Intro	Outfielder catches a deep fly ball or hit and throws to the cutoff man (SS or 2B standing in shallow outfield). Cutoff man catches, pivots, and relays to home or third. Walk through the footwork — receive, pivot, throw in one fluid motion.	Cutoff raises both hands as a target for the outfielder. Catch the throw and pivot with momentum — don't stop your feet. Relay to home in one fluid motion: catch → pivot → throw. Cue: 'Hands up as a target... catch and pivot... relay.' Walk through slowly first, then full speed.	Baseballs
8	★ Catcher Pop Time & Throw to 2nd	Catcher receives a pitch, pops up out of the squat, and throws to second base to catch a steal. Focus: quick release, stay low out of the squat, throw at knee-to-waist height. Second baseman covers and catches.	Pop up low — don't stand all the way up before throwing. Quick release: glove to throwing hand exchange must be fast. Throw at knee-to-waist height — not a rainbow arc. Cue: 'Stay low, quick exchange, throw on a line.' Time the pop times if possible — it creates competitive focus.	Stopwatch, Baseballs
9	★ Double Play Footwork — 2B Pivot	Shortstop feeds to second base. Second baseman catches, touches the bag, and pivots to throw to first. Focus on footwork: straddle the bag, catch, step off, throw. No runner needed — just footwork reps.	Straddle the bag, catch the feed, touch the bag with either foot, step off to avoid a runner, and throw to first. Footwork only in this drill — no concern with runners yet. Cue: 'Straddle... catch... touch... step off... throw.' Get 10+ reps of clean footwork before adding speed.	Baseballs


#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
10	★ Outfield — Read & React off the Bat	Player starts in ready position. Coach hits a fly ball or line drive with no verbal cue. Player must read the ball off the bat immediately and break in the right direction. No cheating — stay still until contact.	Stay in ready position until the ball is hit — no cheating forward or backward. Read the ball off the bat: ball flight angle and speed tell you everything. Break immediately on contact. Cue: 'Stay still... stay still... NOW GO.' If players are slow to react, they are reading the pitcher instead of the contact.	Baseballs
11	★ Bunt Defense	Coach drops a bunt near the plate. Third baseman or pitcher charges, fields the ball, and throws to first. Second bunt goes toward first — first baseman charges. Walk through both, then speed it up.	Call the ball immediately: 'Mine!' Cover the area, field it, throw to first — execution over speed at first. After walking through, speed it up. Emphasize calling the ball so coverage assignments are clear. Cue: 'Call it and go — get the out at first.' The first baseman must hold the bag briefly after charging.	Baseballs
12	★ Live Baserunning Reads	Batter is set at home plate, player leads off first. Coach hits a grounder or fly ball — runner must make the correct read: run hard on a grounder, freeze on a line drive, tag on a deep fly. Coach corrects after each rep.	Three reads to train: grounder → run hard (ball through the infield is a go), line drive → freeze (could be caught), deep fly → tag up (if it's caught you can score). Cue: 'Watch the ball, read the type, react correctly.' Correct after every rep — wrong reads become bad habits fast.	Baseballs
13	★ Infield Live Situations — Force & Tag Plays	Coach hits grounders with varying base scenarios. Fielders must identify the force vs. tag play before fielding: 'Is this a force? Who covers?' Make the play, then debrief. Rotate players through multiple positions.	Identify force vs. tag before the ball is hit — pre-pitch reads are an elite skill. Ask before each rep: 'Is this a force? Who's covering?' Make the play, then debrief: 'Was that the right call? Why?' Rotate players through multiple positions so everyone understands all defensive assignments.	Baseballs
14	★ Full Relay — OF to IF to Home	Outfielder catches a deep hit, throws to cutoff (SS or 2B), who relays home to the catcher. Full team coordination drill. Rotate all players through outfield and cutoff roles. Emphasize communication on every play.	Communication on every throw: outfielder calls 'relay!', cutoff raises hands, catcher calls 'cut!' or 'let it go!' based on runner position. Full team coordination — everyone has a role. Rotate all players through outfield and cutoff roles. Cue: 'Talk on every throw — no silent plays.'	Baseballs
15	★ Ground Ball Gauntlet	Coach hits 8 grounders in rapid succession to the player — mix of forehand, backhand, straight-on, and slow rollers. Player fields as many cleanly as possible. Track streak. Beat your score from last week.	8 grounders, rapid succession — mix forehand, backhand, straight-on, and slow rollers. Track the streak: how many consecutive clean fields? Count aloud. Cue: 'Stay ready — next one is coming.' Beat your score from last week. This creates personal accountability and measures improvement week over week.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
1 6	★ Live Defense Mini- Game	Full team defense with a live batter and baserunners. Coach hits to create real game scenarios. Team earns a point for every clean defensive play — fielding, throw, and catch all count. Celebrate every successful execution.	All three parts of a defensive play count: fielding, throw, AND catch. If the fielder makes a great play but the first baseman drops it — no point, but acknowledge both parts. Celebrate every point loudly. Cue after each play: 'What did we do right there?' Reinforce the positive.	Baseballs
1 7	★ Double Play Footwork — Full Sequence	Shortstop fields a grounder, feeds to second base. Second baseman catches, pivots off the bag, and fires to first. Focus on timing and footwork at both ends. Rotate players through SS and 2B. No shortcuts on the pivot.	No shortcuts on the pivot — catch, touch the bag, step off, throw. The full sequence is the only sequence. Time the full DP from bat contact to first baseman's catch. Target: under 4.5 seconds at 10U. Cue: 'No shortcuts — every step counts.' Rotate players through both SS and 2B.	Baseballs
1 8	★ Outfield — Angle Routes	Coach hits balls at angles to the outfielder's left or right — not directly at them. Player must take the correct angle route (not just run straight back or straight to the side) to cut off the ball efficiently.	Take the most efficient route to the ball's landing spot — not a straight line at the ball. Read the angle, take the angle route, then straighten to intercept. Cue: 'Angle to where it's going — not where it is.' An efficient angle route covers more ground than a straight sprint toward the ball.	Baseballs
1 9	★ Pitcher Fielding Practice (PFP)	Coach hits or rolls a comebacker to the pitcher's mound. Pitcher fields, sets feet, and throws to first. Then: bunt to the right side — pitcher charges, fields, and throws. Quick decisions under simulated game speed.	Comebacker: field it cleanly, set feet, throw to first — quick and accurate. Bunt right side: charge hard, field, throw to first with a short arm throw. Cue: 'Field it, set feet, quick release.' At game speed, pitchers have less time than they think — train the quick release on every rep.	Baseballs
2 0	★ Multi- Scenario Baserunning	Runners at different bases, coach hits various ball types. Runners must make correct reads: tag up on a deep fly, run hard on a grounder, freeze on a line drive. Coach debrief after each rep — what was the right read and why?	Three scenarios to train simultaneously: deep fly → tag up; grounder → run hard; line drive → freeze. Debrief after every rep: 'What was the right read? Why?' The explanation reinforces the decision-making pattern. Cue: 'Read the ball type first — then react.' Wrong reads are corrected immediately.	Baseballs
2 1	★ Position Mastery Showcase	Players play their primary position. Coach hits 8 varied balls — mix of grounders, fly balls, line drives, and slow rollers. Goal: make every play look routine and confident. No panic, just execution.	Routine and confident execution is the goal — no panic, no hesitation. 8 varied balls: mix of grounders, fly balls, line drives, slow rollers. After each play, brief positive reinforcement. Cue: 'Make it look routine.' Coaches note growth from Week 1 — give specific improvement feedback at the end.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
2 2	★ Full Relay — Extended Sequence	Outfielder fields, throws to cutoff, cutoff reads the play and relays to either home or third based on coach's signal. Full team on the field. Everyone rotates. Debrief communication after each rep.	Cutoff reads the coach's signal and relays to the correct base. Debrief communication after each rep: was the cutoff called off? Was the relay on target? Was there a backup? Cue: 'Talk through every play.' Everyone rotates — all players experience every role.	Baseballs
2 3	★ Gauntlet — Personal Season Record	Coach hits 10 grounders: forehands, backhands, slow rollers, hard shots. Player fields as many cleanly as possible and counts their personal record. Try to beat their best score from any previous week.	Track personal records and announce them publicly. 10 grounders: forehand, backhand, slow roller, hard shot — all types. Count clean fields. Beat your personal best. Cue: 'Can you beat your record?' Coaches track and announce all-time bests at the end of the session.	Baseballs
2 4	★ Live Game — No Coaching, Just Play	Full live defense with batter and baserunners. Coaches call no plays, make no corrections — players must communicate and execute entirely on their own. After the inning, team debrief: what decisions did we make well? What would we do differently?	No coaching during the inning — players communicate and execute entirely on their own. Coaches watch and take mental notes only. After the inning, team debrief: 'What decisions did we make well? What would we do differently?' This develops baseball IQ — the ability to play without being coached.	Baseballs
2 5	Short Hop Mastery	Coach bounces a ball 3–4 ft in front of the player — a true short hop. Player must field it cleanly with soft hands. Alternate between short hops and regular grounders with no verbal cue. 15 reps total.	Short hops are fielded by meeting the ball on the way up — not waiting for it. Get the glove down early and let the hop come to the glove. The worst thing to do on a short hop is pull back — that causes errors. Attack the short hop aggressively. Cue: 'Attack the short hop — glove down early.'	Baseballs
2 6	Triangle Throwing Drill	Three players form a triangle 30 ft apart. Ball is thrown around the triangle in sequence. After 5 reps clockwise, reverse counterclockwise. Add a rule: if any throw is not a chest-high strike, that player does 5 jumping jacks.	Step toward your target on every single throw. Elbow up, follow through. Chest-high throws are the standard. Build the muscle memory for that height. The accountability rule (jumping jacks) makes accuracy competitive without being punitive. Cue: 'Chest-high strike — every throw.'	Baseballs
2 7	Four-Corners Relay	One player at each base. Ball starts at home, thrown to third, to second, to first, and back home. Time the full circuit. Goal: under 12 seconds for a clean circuit. Reverse direction each round.	Quick release on every throw — no wind-up. Feet in throwing position before the ball arrives. Players who hesitate or take extra steps to reset add time to the relay. Cue: 'Quick release — feet ready before the ball gets to you.' Time every circuit and announce it.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
2 8	Lateral Shuffle + Field	Set up 3 cones in a line 4 ft apart. Player shuffles through the cones laterally, then fields a grounder rolled by the coach to either side. Player fields, shuffles back through the cones, and fields another grounder. 10 reps.	Stay low through the entire shuffle — do not stand up between the cones and crouch back down for the grounder. The body should stay at the same height throughout. Cue: 'Low through the cones, low on the field.' Lateral footwork done low is lateral footwork that translates to game range.	Cones, Baseballs
2 9	Fly Ball + Call Drill	Two players stand 15 ft apart in the outfield. Coach hits a fly ball between them. Both players must call the ball — whoever calls first (and loudest) takes it, the other backs up. If neither calls, both do 5 push-ups.	Call early and call loud. The call must come when the ball is still in the air — not when it is 10 ft away. 'I got it!' and then go get it. No silent catches at any level. The push-up consequence for no call creates urgency around communication. Cue: 'Call it early — be loud.'	Baseballs
3 0	Arm Path Ground Ball Throw	Player fields a grounder and throws to a base — but coach watches only the arm path, not the result. Does the player use a full overhand throw? Is the elbow above the shoulder? Does the arm follow through across the body?	Full overhand: elbow up, wrist behind ball at release, arm crosses the body on follow-through. An improper arm path from the infield leads to accuracy issues and arm injuries over time. Cue: 'Elbow up, follow through across the body.' Evaluate arm path on 15 consecutive throws.	Baseballs
3 1	Backup Base Drill	Coach hits the ball to a random position. Every player — not just the fielder — must immediately run to their backup responsibility. After the play, coach calls on a random player: Where did you go? Why? If they cannot answer, the whole team does 5 push-ups.	Backup responsibilities exist for every hit ball — infielders back up bases, outfielders back up throws, pitchers cover first or back up home. A team that backs up every play prevents extra bases on overthrows. Cue: 'Where is your backup? GO!' Quiz randomly after each play.	Baseballs
3 2	Rapid Fire Infield	Coach hits grounders to all 4 infield positions as fast as possible — before the previous fielder has finished their throw. All 4 infielders field at the same time. Coach hits 10 balls in 60 seconds.	Stay ready between grounders — the next ball is coming immediately. Field, throw, reset, repeat. This drill prepares players for the mental focus required during a live inning. Cue: 'Reset fast — next ball is coming NOW.' If the pace is too fast, slow slightly but keep it faster than normal stations.	Baseballs
3 3	Cutoff & Relay Introduction	Outfielder fields a ball hit to the warning track. Infielder (SS or 2B) positions themselves as the cutoff at 50–60 ft. Outfielder throws to the cutoff, cutoff pivots and throws home or to third based on coach's signal.	The cutoff player raises both hands as a target. Outfielder throws chest-high to the cutoff — not over the cutoff's head. Cutoff catches, pivots with momentum, and makes the relay in one fluid motion. Cue: 'Hands up as a target... throw to the chest... catch and pivot... relay.' Walk through slowly, then full speed.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
3	Live Ball	Coach announces the base situation, then hits or rolls a ball anywhere in the field. Defense must execute the correct play: field, decide where to throw, communicate, and execute. Debrief after each play: Was that the right call? Why?	This drill is the translation layer between individual skill drills and actual game defense. Repetition of the full sequence — field, decide, execute — under varied situations is what builds baseball IQ. Debrief every single play. Cue: 'Field it, decide, communicate, execute — in that order.'	Baseballs
4	Situation Drill			

 Station Tip: Substitute any of these drills into a defensive station slot as needed. Rotate 3–4 players through at a time while others continue at standard stations.

12U YOUTH BASEBALL DEFENSIVE DRILLS

Focus: Advanced footwork, double play mechanics, and team defensive coordination

Station Substitution Guide | Youth Baseball Practice Plans

LEVEL-WIDE COACHING POINTS

- ✓ At 12U, fielding errors are often footwork errors — the hands are fine, but the feet put the player in the wrong position.
- ✓ Double play execution is a signature skill of good 12U teams. Drill it until the footwork is automatic.
- ✓ Outfield communication and positioning must be coached deliberately — outfielders who shade correctly prevent extra base hits.
- ✓ Catchers are the backbone of team defense. Their communication sets the tone for the entire infield.
- ✓ Advanced team defense: shifts, coverage assignments, and defensive alignments should be introduced and practiced regularly.

DRILLS (34 total) — Each drill fits within a single 9-minute station slot

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
1	★ Infield — First Step & Footwork	Ready position: feet wide, weight on balls of feet, hands loose. Coach hits a ball — players focus on the first crossover step to the ball before shuffling. 10 reps each. Forehand and backhand in equal proportion.	The first crossover step determines range — it must be explosive and in the correct direction. Feet wide, weight on balls of feet, hands loose and in front. Cue: 'Crossover first, then shuffle.' Forehand and backhand in equal proportion — most infielders practice forehand only. The backhand first step is equally important.	Baseballs
2	★ Outfield — Drop Step & Read	Player in ready position. Coach hits without verbal cue. Player reads the ball off the bat and takes the correct drop step. Mix of over the head, to the side, and in front. No backpedaling — open hips and run.	Read the ball off the bat immediately — trajectory and speed tell you direction and distance. Drop step: open hips and run, do not backpedal. Mix ball locations: over the head, to the side, and coming in. Cue: 'Read the trajectory — drop step — GO.' No backpedaling on any rep.	Baseballs
3	★ Crow-Hop & Throwing Accuracy	Player fields a grounder or fly ball, executes a crow-hop, and throws to a specific target (coach's glove at a base ~60 ft). Count consecutive accurate throws. Accuracy and arm mechanics over raw arm strength.	Crow-hop sequence: field → small skip-step with back foot landing toward the target → drive off and throw. Count consecutive accurate throws — chest-high strikes to the target. Accuracy over arm strength: a precise throw at 70% effort beats a wild throw at 100%. Cue: 'Skip... drive... throw on a line.'	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
4	★ Catcher — Blocking Basics	Catcher gets in blocking position for balls in the dirt. Coach throws balls low to the left, right, and directly in front. Drop to knees, chin down, funnel the ball in front of the body. Rotate catchers in every 3 reps.	Drop to both knees immediately — don't half-block. Chin down to prevent the ball bouncing up to the face. Funnel the ball in front of the body with the chest pad — not to the side. Cue: 'Drop... chin down... funnel it in front.' Rotate catchers every 3 reps so all players experience this skill.	Baseballs
5	★ Double Play — Feed & Pivot	SS feeds to 2B and vice versa. Focus on the pivot: catch, touch the bag, step off to avoid the runner, and fire accurately to first. Walk through footwork at both ends. Speed up gradually. No shortcuts on footwork.	No shortcuts on the pivot — every step is required. Catch the feed, touch the bag, step off to avoid the runner, fire to first. Walk through the footwork at both ends before running at speed. Cue: 'Catch... touch... step off... throw.' Time the sequence and announce it. Target: under 4.5 seconds.	Baseballs
6	★ Bunt Defense — All Scenarios	Coach drops bunts to all areas: toward 1B, toward 3B, directly in front. Corners charge, pitcher covers the open area, catcher directs traffic. Rotate through positions. Execution over speed — get the out at first.	Catcher directs traffic — calls who fields the bunt immediately. Corners charge, pitcher covers the open area, first baseman holds briefly. Execution over speed: get the out at first cleanly. Cue: 'Catcher calls it... corners charge... get the out at first.' Rotate positions so everyone knows every assignment.	Baseballs
7	★ Catcher — Pop Up & Throw to 2B	Catcher receives a pitch (or has a ball tossed at them), pops up out of the squat, and throws to second to catch a steal. Focus: quick release (under 2 seconds), stay low out of squat, accurate throw at knee height. SS or 2B covers.	Quick release under 2 seconds — time every throw. Stay low coming out of the squat — don't stand all the way up before throwing. Accurate throw at knee height to second base. Cue: 'Pop... stay low... quick exchange... throw on a line.' Time every pop throw and announce the times.	Baseballs
8	★ Outfield — Cutoff Communication	Outfielder catches a hit, throws to the cutoff man (SS/2B). Cutoff must communicate: 'cut!' or 'let it go!' based on runner's position. Runner starts at second — is the play at home or hold? Walk through, then execute at full speed.	Cutoff communication is the key skill: 'Cut!' means catch and relay. 'Let it go!' means the throw will beat the runner without a cutoff. The decision must be made based on runner position and throw quality. Cue: 'Cutoff reads the play — cut or let it go.' Walk through the decision-making first.	Baseballs


#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
9	★ Backhand — Field & Throw Footwork	Coach hits sharply to the backhand side. Player opens glove, reaches, fields out in front of body, plants the back foot, and throws to first. No spin moves — plant and throw. 10 reps each, tracking accuracy to first.	Plant the back foot toward the target before throwing — no spin moves. The plant step is what makes the backhand throw accurate. Open the glove (rotate it), extend out in front, field the ball, plant the right foot toward first, drive off and throw. Cue: 'Open the glove... extend... plant... throw.' 10 reps, track accuracy.	Baseballs
10	★ Outfield — Angle Routes & Shading	Coach hits balls at various angles — player must take the most efficient route, not a straight line to the ball. If the ball is hit at an angle to the right, player angles right and then straightens to intercept. Eliminate unnecessary steps.	Route efficiency is speed. Take the angle to the landing spot — not a straight line at the ball. If the ball is hit at an angle to the right, angle right first, then straighten to intercept. Cue: 'Angle to the landing spot — not at the ball.' Eliminate unnecessary steps: every wasted step gives the runner an extra base.	Baseballs
11	★ Rundown Execution	Two fielders, one runner caught between bases. Fielders execute a proper rundown: run the runner back toward the base they came from, only one pump fake, close distance and make the tag. Keep throws to a minimum — 2 max before the tag.	Run the runner back toward the base they came from. One pump fake maximum — not multiple fakes. Close the distance aggressively and make the tag. Keep throws to a minimum: 2 max before the tag must happen. Cue: 'Run them back... one fake... close and tag.' Time it — under 5 seconds is the target.	Baseballs
12	★ Pitcher Fielding — PFP Scenarios	Comebacker to the mound: pitcher fields and throws to first. Slow roller to the right: pitcher charges and throws across the body. Bunt: pitcher charges hard left or right. Rep all three scenarios at increasing speed.	Three scenarios, three different footwork patterns. Comebacker: field, set feet, throw to first. Slow roller right: charge, throw across the body with a short arm throw. Bunt: charge hard left or right, call the ball, throw to first. Rep all three at increasing speed. Cue: 'Know your play before you field it.'	Baseballs
13	★ Force vs. Tag Identification	Coach calls base scenarios before hitting. Fielder must identify: is this a force or a tag play? Make the correct call first, then execute the play. Wrong call = redo. Builds pre-pitch mental preparation.	Identify force vs. tag BEFORE the ball is hit — this is a pre-pitch mental skill. Wrong call = redo immediately. Ask before each rep: 'Force or tag? Where?' Make the play, then debrief. Cue: 'Know the play before the pitch.' Pre-pitch mental preparation separates good defenders from great ones.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
1 4	★ First & Third Defense	Runner on first and third. Infield executes options: throw through to second, cut and check the runner at third, or fake throw to second and fire home. Walk through all options, then execute on coach's signal.	Three options: (1) throw through to second and check the third runner, (2) cut and throw home, (3) fake to second and fire home. Walk through all three before executing. Execute on coach's signal — no pre-knowing which option. Cue: 'Know all three options — react to the signal.' The cutoff reads the third runner.	Baseballs
1 5	★ Outfield — Do-or-Die Throws	Runner on second, ball hit to outfield. Outfielder must make a do-or-die throw home on the run — no time to set feet. Track accuracy and arm strength. Catcher receives and blocks if needed.	The do-or-die throw is the hardest outfield play — fielding at full speed and throwing home without setting the feet. Approach the ball from the glove side so the body is already angled toward home. Throw on a line — not a rainbow. Cue: 'Approach from the glove side... field... throw home on a line.' Track accuracy.	Baseballs
1 6	★ Infield — Ground Ball Gauntlet with Decision	Coach hits 8 rapid grounders with a called base scenario each time. Player fields and makes the correct throw — no hesitation. Mix: throw to first, throw to second, throw home. Tests reads, footwork, and arm under pressure.	8 rapid grounders with a different scenario called each time: throw to first, throw to second, throw home. No hesitation — field and throw to the correct base. Cue: 'Field it, hear the call, throw — no hesitation.' This tests reads, footwork, and arm accuracy under maximum pressure simultaneously.	Baseballs
1 7	★ Double Play — Live Speed	Full double play at game speed: grounder to SS, feed to 2B, relay to first. Mix in a grounder to 2B with SS covering second. Time the full sequence. Goal: under 4.5 seconds from bat contact to first baseman catching the ball.	Game speed — no walking through. Time the full sequence from bat contact to first baseman's catch. Target: under 4.5 seconds. Mix SS-to-2B and 2B-to-SS feeds. Hard-hit balls test the feed quality. Cue: 'Game speed from the first rep.' Announce the time after each double play.	Baseballs
1 8	★ Outfield — Jump Read Drill	Player stands in ready position. Coach hits the ball without a verbal cue. Player must read the trajectory immediately off the bat and take the first step in the correct direction before the ball travels 30 ft. React, don't guess.	React to the trajectory off the bat — don't guess based on where the batter is standing. First step must happen before the ball travels 30 ft. React, don't guess. Cue: 'Read the trajectory — move NOW.' If players are late, they are reacting to the ball, not reading it off the bat.	Baseballs
1 9	★ Catcher — Full Blocking Sequence	Catcher blocks 3 balls in the dirt (left, middle, right), pops up, and throws to second. Full sequence repeated 5 times. Measure pop time: catch to second base catch. Under 2.0 seconds is the target.	Full sequence: block 3 balls in the dirt (left, middle, right), pop up, throw to second. Measure pop time — catch to second base catch. Under 2.0 seconds is the target at 12U. Cue: 'Block... block... block... pop... throw.' 5 full sequences. Time every throw.	Stopwatch, Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
20	★ Live Team Defense — 3-Out Inning	Full team defense executes a 3-out inning with a live batter and baserunners. Coach hits to simulate real game situations. Players must communicate every pitch. No play goes without a verbal call. Debrief after the inning.	Communication required on every single play — no silent plays. Every fielder calls their coverage assignment before each pitch. No play goes without a verbal call. Debrief after the inning: what did we communicate well? What was silent? Cue: 'Talk on every pitch — every play.'	Baseballs
21	★ Position Showcase — Best 8 Reps	Players at their primary position. Coach hits 8 balls: mix of everything learned over 6 weeks. Grade each play: routine = 1 point, difficult = 2 points, exceptional = 3 points. Players track their own score.	Grade system: routine play = 1 point, difficult play = 2 points, exceptional play = 3 points. Players track their own score — competing against their own personal best. After 8 balls, announce totals. Cue: 'Every play is worth something — compete on every one.' This rewards execution quality, not just error-free play.	Baseballs
22	★ Full Team Relay — No Coaching	Outfield to cutoff to home. Coaches call no plays and make no corrections during the drill — players communicate and execute entirely on their own. Multiple reps with different fielders. Post-drill team debrief only.	No coaching during the drill — players communicate and execute entirely on their own. Coaches watch and take notes only. Multiple reps with different fielders. Post-drill team debrief only: what communication worked? What broke down? The self-execution is the training — coaching after is the reinforcement.	Baseballs
23	★ Gauntlet — Season Personal Record	10 grounders: all types, all directions, rapid fire. Player counts clean fields. Goal: beat their personal record from any previous week. Coaches track and announce all-time bests at the end.	10 grounders, rapid fire, all types. Count clean fields with correct throws — both fielding AND throwing correctly counts. Track personal records throughout the season. Announce all-time bests at the end of the session. Cue: 'Beat your best.' The personal record challenge makes every rep meaningful.	Baseballs
24	★ Live Game — 6-Inning Finale	Full live game defense — coaches pitch or use a machine, live baserunners, all defensive positions. No coaching during the inning. Players run everything. After each inning, team-only debrief: what did we do well? What would we change?	No coaching during the innings — players run everything: communication, positioning, plays, and adjustments. After each inning, team-only debrief: what did we do well? What would we change? Coaches add context only after the team has spoken. Finish with a team handshake and season cheer.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
2 5	Footwork First Drill	Coach hits a grounder to an infielder. Before the player can throw, they must execute 3 perfect crow-hop steps toward their target. No throw until the footwork is complete and correct. 10 reps per player.	Most infield errors at 12U are footwork errors disguised as throwing errors. Bad feet = bad throws. Crow-hop: field the ball, step with the glove-side foot toward the target, drive off the back foot, and throw. No throw until the footwork is correct. Cue: 'Footwork first — then throw.' 10 reps.	Baseballs
2 6	Double Play Depth Drill	SS and 2B start at double-play depth (2–3 steps closer to the plate than normal). Coach hits a medium-speed grounder to one of them. They field and feed to the other, who pivots and throws to first. Target under 4.5 seconds.	Double-play depth shortens the throw distance on the feed and gives more time for the pivot. The feed should be a firm underhand or sidearm toss, knee-to-chest height, directly at the bag. Never a rainbow toss on a DP feed. Cue: 'Knee-to-chest, directly at the bag — no rainbow.' Time every sequence.	Baseballs
2 7	Pop Time Challenge — Infield	Time every throw from the point of fielding to the point of the catch at the target base. Shortstop to first: target under 1.8 seconds. Third base to first: target under 2.1 seconds. Second base to first: target under 1.6 seconds.	Quick release beats arm strength every time. Drill the exchange: field, transfer, release. The time from glove to throwing motion is where most time is lost. Cue: 'Quick exchange — feet in position before the ball arrives.' Time every throw and announce it.	Stopwatch, Baseballs
2 8	Outfield Positioning & Shading	Coach announces batter type: Pull hitter/line drive speed or Contact hitter/spray chart. Outfielders adjust their positioning before each rep. Coach hits the ball — if the outfielder is in the correct position, the ball should come right to them.	Positioning is the most undercoached outfield skill. Teach outfielders to move before every pitch: count, batter tendencies, pitcher's pitch, game situation. A 10-step adjustment before the pitch beats a 25-step reaction after it. Cue: 'Move before the pitch — position matters more than speed.'	Baseballs
2 9	Do-Or-Die Outfield Throw	Runner on second, ball hit to the outfield with less than 2 outs. Outfielder must make a do-or-die throw home — no hesitation, no crow-hop. Field on the run and throw home in one motion.	The do-or-die throw is the hardest outfield play. Approach the ball from the glove side so the body is already angled toward home. Field on the run and throw in one motion — no stopping. Cue: 'Approach from the glove side... field on the run... throw home — no stopping.' Track accuracy.	Baseballs
3 0	First & Third Defense Execution	Runners on first and third. Infield executes all three options in sequence: (1) throw through to second, SS reads the runner at third, (2) cut and throw home, (3) fake to second and gun to third. Coach signals which option after the pitch. 3 reps per option.	Every player must know their role in each first-and-third option before it is executed. The decision belongs to the catcher and the middle infielder. When in doubt: throw through to second. Cue: 'Know all three options... read the signal... execute.' 3 reps of each option at game speed.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
3 1	Bunt Coverage Rotation	Coach calls bunt before rolling a ball toward the mound or down either line. All 4 infielders and the pitcher execute their bunt coverage assignments. Execute 5 reps to all areas.	Bunt coverage is one of the most team-complex plays in baseball — 5 players move simultaneously. The first call is who is fielding: 'Mine!' Everyone else executes their coverage assignment immediately. Cue: 'Bunt!' and watch if everyone moves in unison. If anyone hesitates, pause and re-walk through their assignment.	Baseballs
3 2	Infield Pressure Gauntlet	Coach hits 10 consecutive grounders to the same player — mix of forehand, backhand, slow roller, hard shot, and short hop. Player fields and throws to first on every rep. Coach tracks: clean fields and accurate throws separately.	High-volume pressure reps build mental toughness and physical stamina. After rep 7 or 8, the player's technique breaks down — that is where the real coaching opportunity is. Technique under fatigue shows up in the seventh inning. Cue: 'Stay technical — even when you're tired.' Track fields and throws separately.	Baseballs
3 3	Outfield-to-Cutoff Communication Game	Two teams: outfielders vs. infield. Coach hits deep fly balls and line drives. If the outfield-to-cutoff relay results in a runner being held or thrown out, outfield earns a point. If the runner advances an extra base, infield earns a point.	The relay throw system is a competition between the defense and the baserunner. Cutoffs who receive a perfect throw and relay quickly win every time. Communication is the deciding factor. Cue: 'Talk on every relay — cut or let it go.' Track score and announce it. Competition drives focus.	Baseballs
3 4	No-Coaching Live Defense	Full team takes the field. Coach pitches or hits without calling any plays or making any corrections during the inning. Players must communicate and execute entirely on their own. After 3 outs, team debrief: What did we execute well? What would we change?	The best indicator of whether a skill has been learned is whether players can execute it without coaching. If a defensive concept breaks down when the coach stops coaching it, it has not been learned — it has been managed. Cue: 'You've got this — communicate and play.' Coach watches only.	Baseballs

 **Station Tip:** Substitute any of these drills into a defensive station slot as needed. Rotate 3–4 players through at a time while others continue at standard stations.

14U YOUTH BASEBALL DEFENSIVE DRILLS

Focus: Elite defensive range, advanced team concepts, and game IQ

Station Substitution Guide | Youth Baseball Practice Plans

LEVEL-WIDE COACHING POINTS

- ✓ At 14U, defense wins championships. Teams with consistent, heads-up defense beat teams that rely on hitting alone.
- ✓ Range is the difference between good and great defenders. Train lateral quickness, first-step reaction, and route efficiency every session.
- ✓ Advanced team defense: shifts, wheel play, pick plays, and defensive alignments should all be practiced and game-ready.
- ✓ Players should be able to identify the correct play before the ball is hit — pre-pitch defensive reads are an elite skill.
- ✓ Mental toughness in the field: short memory after errors, staying aggressive, and competing hard on every single pitch regardless of score.

DRILLS (34 total) — Each drill fits within a single 9-minute station slot

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
1	★ Infield — Footwork & First Step Explosion	Ready position: weight forward, hands loose, eyes on the bat. Coach hits — player fires a first crossover step immediately, then shuffles. Forehand and backhand reps equally. No standing flat-footed — explode on every pitch.	Eyes on the bat — not the pitcher. Weight forward, hands loose, body alive. Fire the first crossover step immediately on contact — before the ball has traveled 20 ft. No standing flat-footed on any rep. Cue: 'Eyes on the bat... explode on contact.' Equal forehand and backhand reps — most infielders neglect the backhand first step.	Baseballs
2	★ Outfield — Route Efficiency	Coach hits balls at different angles. Outfielder must take the most direct route to the ball's landing spot — not arc around it. Grade: direct route = 2 pts, indirect route but caught = 1 pt, miss = 0. Efficiency matters more than just catching it.	Efficiency is speed — a direct route covers more ground in less time than a faster player going the wrong way. Grade immediately after each catch: direct route = 2 pts, indirect but caught = 1 pt, miss = 0. Cue: 'Go to where it's going — not where it is.' Announce points after every catch.	Baseballs
3	★ Catcher — Framing & Blocking	Catcher frames 6 borderline pitches (glove presentation matters), then transitions to blocking 6 balls in the dirt. Full sequence both skills. Coaches evaluate glove presentation on framing — subtle, quiet, present the pitch to the umpire.	Framing: subtle and quiet glove presentation — move toward the strike zone, not away from it. Never yank a pitch. Present the glove to the umpire. Blocking: drop to both knees immediately, chin down, funnel the ball in front. Cue for framing: 'Present it to the umpire — don't steal it.' 6 frames, then 6 blocks.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
4	★ Arm Strength & Accuracy — Long Throws	Outfielders throw from warning track to a cutoff man at 90–100 ft. Infielders simulate 3B-to-1B throws at 90 ft. Focus on throwing on a line — no rainbow arc. Crow-hop, 4-seam grip, throw through the target.	Crow-hop, 4-seam grip, throw through the target — not at it. The throw should arrive chest-high to the cutoff. No rainbow arc — throws with arc take longer and bounce in front of the target. Cue: 'Throw through the target — not at it.' Track accuracy at 90+ ft. Arm strength benchmarks are set this week.	Baseballs
5	★ Double Play — Game Speed with Timing	Full double play sequence at game speed: SS-to-2B-to-1B and 2B-to-SS-to-1B. Time it: bat contact to first baseman catch. Target: under 4.2 seconds. Mix in hard-hit balls to test quick hands on the feed.	Time from bat contact to first baseman's catch. Target: under 4.2 seconds at 14U. Mix in hard-hit balls — the feed must still be accurate under hard-hit conditions. Cue: 'Fast hands on hard-hit feeds — stick the pivot.' Announce every time. A 4.0-second DP is an elite play at 14U.	Baseballs
6	★ First & Third — All Options	Runners on first and third. Infield must execute all options based on coach's hand signal: (1) throw through to second and check third runner, (2) cut and throw home, (3) fake to second and fire home, (4) step off and check. Players make the call without verbal cues.	No verbal cues — execute on the hand signal only. All four options must be practiced until they are automatic. Players make the call without coaching prompts. Cue: 'Read the signal... execute immediately.' The step-off option is often overlooked but wins more often than players think. Mix signals randomly.	Baseballs
7	★ Catcher — Pop Time Benchmark	5 pop-up throws to second base. Coach times each one. Target: under 1.9 seconds for strong catchers. Review mechanics after each throw — quick release and accuracy matter more than raw arm strength.	Quick release under 1.9 seconds is the target for strong 14U catchers. Time every single throw and announce it. Review mechanics after each: did the catcher stay low out of the squat? Was the exchange fast? Was the throw accurate at knee height? Cue: 'Quick exchange... stay low... throw on a line.' Accuracy matters more than arm strength.	Stopwatch, Baseballs
8	★ Outfield — Do-or-Die Throw Home	Runner on second, ball hit to outfield. Outfielder reads, charges or drops back, and makes a do-or-die throw home on the run — no time to set feet. Catcher receives and blocks if needed. Accuracy and arm strength under full game-speed pressure.	Approach the ball from the glove side so the body is already angled toward home. Field on the run and throw home in one motion — no stopping to set feet. Throw on a line. Catcher receives and blocks if needed. Cue: 'Approach from the glove side... field on the run... throw home.' This is the hardest outfield play — train it under pressure.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
9	★ Infield — Hard-Hit Ball Reactions	Coach hits hard shots at full speed — no medium-speed grounders. Players must handle game-speed balls hit directly at them and to both sides. Builds hands and reaction time at a level that prepares them for competitive play.	No medium-speed grounders — every ball is hit at full game speed. Players must handle hard shots directly at them and to both sides. Soft hands absorb the hard-hit ball. Cue: 'Soft hands — let the ball come to the glove.' If players are flinching, the speed is appropriate — flinching is a reaction to train through, not around.	Baseballs
10	★ Outfield — Back on the Ball	Coach hits balls over the outfielder's head — varying distance. Player must open hips, run full speed with their back to the infield, and make the catch over the shoulder or adjust back to find the ball. No giving up on a ball over the head.	Open the hips and run full speed with the back to the infield — do not backpedal. Make the catch over the shoulder. If the ball is overrun, adjust back to find it. No giving up on a ball over the head. Cue: 'Turn and run — full speed. Find it over your shoulder.' This is the play that most outfielders give up on.	Baseballs
11	★ Rundown — Fast & Efficient	Two fielders, one runner. Execute a max-2-throw rundown: run the runner back, one hard pump fake, throw when you are within 15 ft and closing. Tag the runner. Time it — a well-executed rundown should take under 5 seconds.	Max 2 throws before the tag must happen. Run the runner back aggressively — close the distance. One hard pump fake. When within 15 ft and closing, throw to the receiving fielder and make the tag. Time every rundown — under 5 seconds is the target. Cue: 'Run them back... one fake... close... tag.' More throws = more chances for errors.	Baseballs
12	★ Live Defense — No Outs Scenario	No outs, runners on base, coach hits to create the hardest possible scenarios: double play opportunities, sacrifice fly decisions, squeeze bunt reads. Team must communicate and execute — no silent plays. Grade: correct play call AND execution required for a point.	Correct play call AND execution — both are required for a point. No silent plays: every fielder verbally communicates their assignment before each pitch. The hardest scenarios: double play opportunities, sacrifice fly decisions, squeeze bunt reads. Cue: 'Call the play before it happens.' Grade call and execution separately.	Baseballs
13	★ Advanced Situational Reads	Coach announces a complex scenario before each rep: infield in, drawn-in corners, shift alignment. Player must know their positioning AND execute the play correctly from that alignment. Baseball IQ test under game conditions.	Pre-pitch positioning matters as much as the play itself. Infield in, drawn-in corners, and shift alignment each change coverage assignments. Player must know their positioning AND execute the play correctly. Cue: 'Know your positioning before the pitch — read the alignment.' Wrong positioning before the pitch = wrong play execution.	Baseballs


#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
1 4	★ Outfield Communication — Priority System	Three outfielders in position. Coach hits balls to gaps and communication zones. Players must use the priority system: center fielder has priority over corner outfielders. Call early, call loud, and back up the catch. Grade: correct priority call = 1 pt, wrong priority = 0.	Center fielder has priority on all balls in the gap — center calls it, corners yield. Call early, call loud, and back up the catch. Grade: correct priority call = 1 pt, wrong priority call = 0. Cue: 'Center fielder has priority — call it early.' No silent plays: both outfielders must communicate on every gap ball.	Baseballs
1 5	★ Catcher — Full Game-Speed Sequence	Catcher executes 5 full sequences: receive pitch, block a ball in the dirt, pop-up throw to second, receive throw back, signal next pitch. Non-stop for 5 reps. Builds the catcher's full skill set under sustained pressure.	Full sequence, non-stop: receive → block → pop-up throw to second → receive return throw → signal next pitch. 5 reps. This builds sustained focus and physical conditioning. Cue: 'Stay in your stance — stay in the sequence.' The last rep should be as clean as the first. Catchers are the backbone of team defense.	Baseballs
1 6	★ No-Coaching Live Defense Inning	Full live defense, 3 outs. No coaching during the inning — players communicate and execute on their own. Coach watches and takes notes only. After the inning, players self-debrief first: 'What did we do well? What would we change?' Coaches add only after.	No coaching, no calls, no corrections during the inning. Coach watches and takes notes only. After the inning, players self-debrief first: 'What did we do well? What would we change?' Coaches add only after the team has spoken. Cue (before the inning): 'You know what to do — communicate and execute.' Then be silent.	Baseballs
1 7	★ Advanced Double Play — Hard Feeds	Hard-hit grounders to SS and 2B. Feed must be fast and accurate — sidearm or rifle throw depending on position. Pivot player must handle a difficult feed AND still make an accurate throw to first. Game-speed from first rep.	Game-speed from the first rep — no warm-up reps. Hard-hit balls require sidearm or rifle feeds. The pivot player must handle a difficult feed and still make an accurate throw to first. Cue: 'Quick hands on the feed... clean pivot... accurate throw.' This is the hardest DP scenario — train it until it's automatic.	Baseballs
1 8	★ Outfield — Diving & Sliding Catches	Coach hits balls just out of reach. Outfielder must attempt a diving catch or sliding catch rather than letting the ball drop for a single. Teach proper dive technique: lead with the glove, protect the body, come up ready to throw.	Dive technique: lead with the glove, land on the chest or forearm, come up immediately ready to throw. A sliding catch: extend the glove and slide feet-first under the ball. Cue: 'Lead with the glove... protect the body... come up ready to throw.' Commit to the dive — a half-dive is the most dangerous play.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
1 9	★ Infield — Pressure Ground Ball Gauntlet	10 grounders at game speed: forehands, backhands, slow rollers, up-the-middle shots, and slow-hit choppers. All with a called throw location. Player tracks clean fields and correct throws. Beat your personal record from previous weeks.	10 grounders at game speed — all types, all directions. Called throw location on every rep. Track clean fields AND correct throws separately — both matter. Beat your personal record from previous weeks. Cue: 'Field it clean, hear the call, throw to the right base.' This is the definitive defensive skills test.	Baseballs
2 0	★ Full Team — 6-Out Pressure Defense	Two full innings of live team defense. Coach hits to simulate a real opponent. Runners on base. Players must execute every play: communication, correct throws, backing up bases. Coach tracks errors and correct decisions separately.	Track errors and correct decisions separately — a good decision on a difficult play is still a win. Communication, correct throws, and backing up bases are all evaluated. Two full innings builds sustained focus and conditioning. Cue: 'Every play — communicate, throw correctly, back up.' Correct decisions matter as much as execution.	Baseballs
2 1	★ Position Mastery — Graded Showcase	Players at their primary position. Coach hits 10 balls — all types, all difficulty levels. Grade: routine play = 1 pt, above-average play = 2 pts, exceptional play = 3 pts. Personal best challenge. Coaches announce top scores.	Grade system: routine play = 1 pt, above-average = 2 pts, exceptional = 3 pts. Players track their own score. Announce top scores. The graded system rewards players who attempt difficult plays — not just players who avoid errors. Cue: 'Every play is worth something — compete for every point.' Compare to Week 1.	Baseballs
2 2	★ Full Team Relay — No Coaching, Full Speed	OF to cutoff to home, multiple scenarios. Zero coaching during the drill. Players communicate, execute, and adjust on their own. After the drill, team-only debrief. Coaches add context after the team has spoken.	Zero coaching during the drill — players are in charge. Multiple scenarios, full speed. After the drill, team-only debrief: what communication worked? What broke down? What would we do differently? Coaches add context after the team has spoken. Cue (before): 'You know the system — communicate and execute.'	Baseballs
2 3	★ Pressure Gauntlet — 10 Grounders, Max Effort	10 grounders at game speed or harder — all types. Player counts clean fields with correct throws. This is their season defensive record attempt. Coach announces results and compares to Week 1. Document the growth.	Max effort — game speed or faster. This is the season defensive record attempt. Count clean fields with correct throws. Announce results and compare to Week 1 publicly. Document the growth. Cue: 'This is your season best — give everything.' The public announcement of the improvement is the reward for 6 weeks of work.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
2 4	★ Live Game Finale — Players Run the Show	Full live game: coaches pitch (or use a machine), live runners, all positions. Coaches make zero calls and zero corrections during the game. Players are in charge of everything: communication, positioning, plays, and adjustments. Post-game: full team debrief led by a player captain.	Zero calls and zero corrections during the game. Players are in charge of everything: communication, positioning, plays, and adjustments. Post-game debrief led by a player captain — coaches speak last. Cue (before the game): 'This is your game — communicate and compete.' Finish with the team's season cheer.	Baseballs
2 5	Reaction Ball Drill	Coach stands 10 ft from the player and throws a reaction ball (irregular-shaped rubber ball that bounces unpredictably) or a racquetball at the ground between them. Player must field the erratic hop. 20 reps.	Stay low and ready — the reaction ball will go anywhere. Soft hands absorb the unpredictable bounce. This drill trains the nervous system to handle bad hops — the situations that cause errors in games. Cue: 'Soft hands... stay low... react to where it goes.' 20 reps minimum.	Reaction Ball, Baseballs
2 6	First Step Quickness — Reaction Timer	Player stands in ready position. Coach uses a random visual or audio signal (drop a ball, clap hands, flash a hand signal). Player explodes with a crossover step in the direction indicated. Time from signal to the player's first step landing. Target: under 0.4 seconds.	The first step is the most important step in fielding. Great defenders get to balls because their first step is faster and more accurate — not because they are overall faster. Crossover step: open the hip and drive with the back foot. Target: under 0.4 seconds from signal to first step. Cue: 'React NOW.'	Baseballs
2 7	Advanced Backhand — Plant & Fire	Coach hits hard shots to the backhand side — balls that require a full extension backhand. Player fields the ball, plants the right foot (glove-hand side), and makes a strong accurate throw across the body to first. No spin moves unless necessary. 10 reps at increasing speed.	The plant step is what makes the backhand throw accurate. Without planting, the throw is off-balance and wild. Plant the foot toward the target, drive off it, and throw. Cue: 'Open the glove... extend... plant the right foot... drive and throw.' No spin moves unless the plant step is impossible.	Baseballs
2 8	Outfield Angle Route Competition	Two outfielders compete side by side. Coach hits identical balls at angles to both of them simultaneously. First outfielder to catch the ball scores a point — but only if they took the correct angle route. Wrong route = no point even if caught.	Route efficiency is speed — a player who takes the correct angle covers more ground in less time than a faster player who goes the wrong way. Efficiency wins the race. Wrong route = no point even if caught. Cue: 'Angle to the landing spot — not at the ball.' The competition drives route discipline.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
2 9	Wheel Play Execution	Runner on third, bunt situation. The wheel play: as the pitcher delivers, the third baseman charges hard, the shortstop covers third, and the first baseman charges the bunt. All players move simultaneously on the pitch. Execute 5 reps from both sides of the plate.	The wheel play requires every player to commit fully before the bunt occurs — there is no half-measure. If anyone hesitates, the play breaks down. Pre-pitch communication is essential. Cue: 'Everyone moves on the pitch — no hesitation.' Execute 5 reps from both sides of the plate — the play looks different with a lefty.	Baseballs
3 0	Shift Defense & Coverage	Coach announces a pull hitter or spray hitter. Infield shifts to the appropriate alignment. Coach hits the ball — the shifted defense must execute the play from their shifted positions. Special attention to who covers second base when the shift is on.	Players must know: in a shift, who covers second on a steal, who covers third on a bunt, and where the uncovered area is. A poorly executed shift gives away outs. A well-executed shift takes away hits. Cue: 'Know your assignment in the shift before the pitch.' Debrief coverage questions after every rep.	Baseballs
3 1	Rundown — Maximum 2 Throws	Runner caught between bases. Two fielders execute a rundown. Rule: maximum 2 throws before the tag must be applied. Fielder with ball runs the runner back aggressively, closes distance, and either tags or delivers a precise throw.	The best rundowns end in 1 throw or 0 throws — just run the player down and tag them. Every additional throw is a chance for an error or wild throw. Maximum 2 throws before the tag must be applied. Cue: 'Run them down — minimize throws.' Time every rundown. Under 5 seconds is the target.	Baseballs
3 2	Pick Play at First Base	Runner takes a big lead off first. Catcher or pitcher executes a snap throw to first for the pick play. First baseman receives and applies a sweep tag. Drill both the pitcher-to-first and the catcher-to-first snap throw. 8 reps each.	The pick play requires timing and surprise — not arm strength. The first baseman must receive the throw with the glove hand and sweep-tag the inside of the bag in one motion. Cue: 'Receive with the glove... sweep-tag the inside of the bag.' The timing between pitcher/catcher and first baseman is the key.	Baseballs
3 3	Pre-Pitch Defensive Read	Before each pitch in a live or simulated situation, every fielder must verbalize their pre-pitch assignment: count, outs, runners, and where the ball goes if it is hit to them. Coach calls on random players before the pitch. If a player cannot answer, the inning is paused.	Elite defenders think before every pitch, not after. Two outs, runner on second, ball hit to me: I am throwing home, not to first. This thought must happen before the pitch. Cue: 'Tell me your assignment before the pitch — every pitch.' If a player cannot answer, pause and walk through it. Never skip this step.	Baseballs

#	Drill Name	Setup & Execution	Key Coaching Cues	Equipment
3	Chaos Infield —	Three coaches each have a ball.	The chaos drill builds peripheral awareness and the ability to focus on your own play while other plays are happening around you. In a real game, a runner is going, a teammate is calling something, and the crowd is loud. Cue: 'Focus on YOUR ball — block out the chaos.' The normal infield round after the chaos feels much easier.	Baseballs
4	Multi-Ball Drill	They hit grounders to different infielders simultaneously. Multiple plays happening at once — players must field their ball and make a throw without interference with other plays. 5 rounds of chaos, then a normal single-ball infield round.		

 Station Tip: Substitute any of these drills into a defensive station slot as needed. Rotate 3–4 players through at a time while others continue at standard stations.