

PRACTICE ORGANIZATION

Routines:

Structure practices around repetitive routines. Following the same (or a similar) program from practice to practice promotes an efficient use of time, players know what to expect and they move better from one task to the next.

Rotations:

Practices should be divided into individual rotations where players work on different aspects of the game. Limit individual rotations to no more than 20 minutes where practical, as players eventually lose interest in a task and practice without focus is meaningless.

If multiple coaches are present, set up multiple stations. Move players from one station to the next or group players together and rotate through stations every 10-20 minutes.

Wherever practical, break players into smaller groups. This promotes more reps per player and less downtime (which inevitably becomes a distraction). Also, setup stations that work on different skills; if they do nothing but field ground balls, practice will get boring quickly.

Fitness:

Having players sprint between rotations or drills is an effective way to incorporate some additional running into practice without making it feel like punishment. For older or higher level teams, setup multiple stations and run the

players from task to task (almost like an obstacle course). Ten to twenty minutes of non-stop drills and sprints is very effective for teams that can keep up.

Competition:

Wherever possible, break the team into groups and create competitions in practice drills. This is also an effective way to disguise running/conditioning drills as game. Some suggestions:

1. During batting practice, break the team in to groups of three. Each group hits until they make 10 total outs. The group with the most hits wins. For older groups, this can also include baserunning and the team with the most runs wins.
2. Break into groups and challenge each group to go longest without making an error. This works for ground balls, fly balls, relay lines or any other simple skill.
3. Divide the team into two groups. One group starts at second base and the other group starts at home. Coach says go and the teams compete in a relay race. One at a time, Each player runs around the bases. Upon completing a lap, the next player in line does the same and the drill continues until every member of one team completes a lap. This is a good way to teach how to properly turn a corner. You can also incor-

porate a slide into the last base as appropriate.

Pitching:

Wherever possible, include pitching practice for the entire team. Even if it is only a 20-pitch bullpen, break the team into pairs and include an opportunity for everyone to pitch. This is an excellent opportunity to work on basic throwing mechanics.

Game Situations:

Create drills around game situations. Field a complete defense, randomly position runners on the bases and hit balls into play. This is an easy way to involve everyone and teach not only fielding and baserunning but also situational awareness.

Live Situations:

Depending upon the age and skill level of your team, expand the Game Situations concept to include live pitching and hitting. If there are enough players, this can be expanded into an intrasquad game (add parents in the outfield to help fill out a defense).

Batting Practice:

End all practices with hitting. If the kids know that they only get to hit when all the other drills are complete — that can be a motivator to keep everyone on task for the duration of practice.

SAMPLE PRACTICE PLANS

BASIC

WARMUP

05:00 PM	05:05 PM	Stretching
05:05 PM	05:10 PM	Running
05:10 PM	05:15 PM	Throwing

BULLPEN

05:15 PM	05:45 PM	Pair off/throw 20 pitch bullpens
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FUNDAMENTALS

05:45 PM	06:00 PM	Ground balls
06:00 PM	06:15 PM	Fly balls

GAME SITUATIONS

06:15 PM	06:30 PM	Place baserunners, coach randomly hits balls to defense. Runners react and defense makes plays.
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BATTING PRACTICE

06:30 PM	07:00 PM	Break team into hitting groups (3-4 players). Bunt as a group (2 each) then 10 swings per player.
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INTERMEDIATE

WARMUP

05:00 PM	05:05 PM	Stretching
05:05 PM	05:10 PM	Running
05:10 PM	05:15 PM	Throwing

BULLPEN

05:15 PM	06:00 PM	Pair off/throw 40 pitch bullpens
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RELAY THROWS

06:00 PM	06:15 PM	Break team into three groups. Position one group in right field, one group at shortstop and one group at third base. Coach hits a ball to right field, the defense fields the ball and executes a relay throw to third base. Players sprint to the next position after each try.
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06:15 PM	06:30 PM	Using the same setup, add a group of runners at first base. Coach hits the ball to right field and the defense tries to throw out the runner going to third base.
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BATTING PRACTICE

06:30 PM	07:00 PM	Break team into hitting groups (3-4 players). Bunt as a group (2 each) then 10 swings per player.
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ADVANCED

WARMUP

05:00 PM	05:05 PM	Stretching
05:05 PM	05:10 PM	Running
05:10 PM	05:15 PM	Throwing

BULLPEN

05:15 PM	06:00 PM	Pair off/throw 50 pitch bullpens
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DOUBLE STEAL DEFENSE

06:00 PM	06:15 PM	Divide the team into two groups. One group in on defense and the other is on the bases. Starting with runners on first and third bases, have the pitcher throw a pitch, the runner on first steals second and the defense works through various defensive alignments and executions. After 15 minutes, the groups switch assignments.
06:15 PM	06:30 PM	

BATTING PRACTICE

06:30 PM	07:00 PM	Break team into hitting groups (3-4 players). Bunt as a group (2 each) then 1 hit and run plus 10 swings per player.
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