

Catching Lessons

Key points:

- Bigger balls are easier to catch
- Consistent throwing speed is easier to catch
- Balls aimed towards hands are easier to catch
- Start with two hand catching
- Start with bare hand catching

****Start with coaches/adults throwing the ball to players** – coaches can vary the throw or ball type to continue to challenge individual players

Equipment Needed:

8-12 Agility Cones

Variety of balls:

- Wiffle balls – 1 bucket
- Tennis balls – 1 bucket
- Large Bouncy Balls (3)
- Bean Bags (8-10)

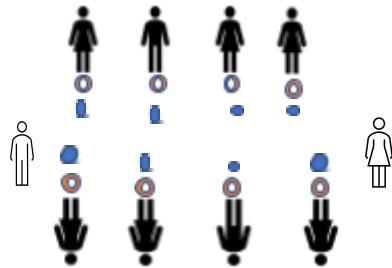
Coaching Points:

- Demo/reinforce proper body position –
 - knees flexed, feet shoulder width
 - Hands together to catch
- Get body under/behind the falling ball centered catch (no reaching wide)
- Start with two hands (images taken from [Rally cap all messed up video](#))
 - Thumbs together when catching chest high (or higher)
 - Pinkys together when catching below the waste



1. Catching: Toss and catch

- o All players line up beside a cone with no gloves
- o Show and practice 'Ready' position with feet spread shoulder width (2 min)
- o Low catch – palm out, pinkys together
- o High catch – fingers up / thumbs together (can make triangle with index fingers and thumbs)
- o Demonstrate toss up catch with bean bag
- o Players practice tossing ball or bean bag up and catching it with 2 hands

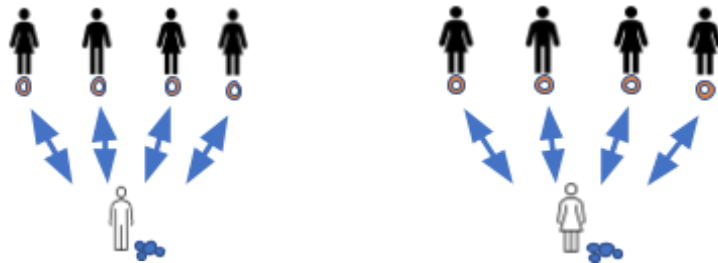


Progressions/Variations:

- Have player throw the ball higher
- Have players catch with one hand up high
- Have players catch with one hand low
- Add glove, have players throw and catch in their glove

2. Catching: Coach to player

- o This activity is similar to [Rally Cap 'All messed up'](#)
- o Divide players into groups of 3-4 players per coach/volunteer
- o Throw 3 balls/bean bags (any type) to each player, after each throw (regardless of whether they catch, they return the ball and you move on to the next player)



Progressions/Variations:

- Coach begins to throw to different places near the player (up higher, down lower, slightly off to side)
 - Move to smaller ball (Tennis balls instead of wiffle balls)
 - Have players throw to each other
 - Add Gloves (t-ball)
- Note: Ideally, split into 3 groups with a volunteer parent!

3. Catching: Run and catch

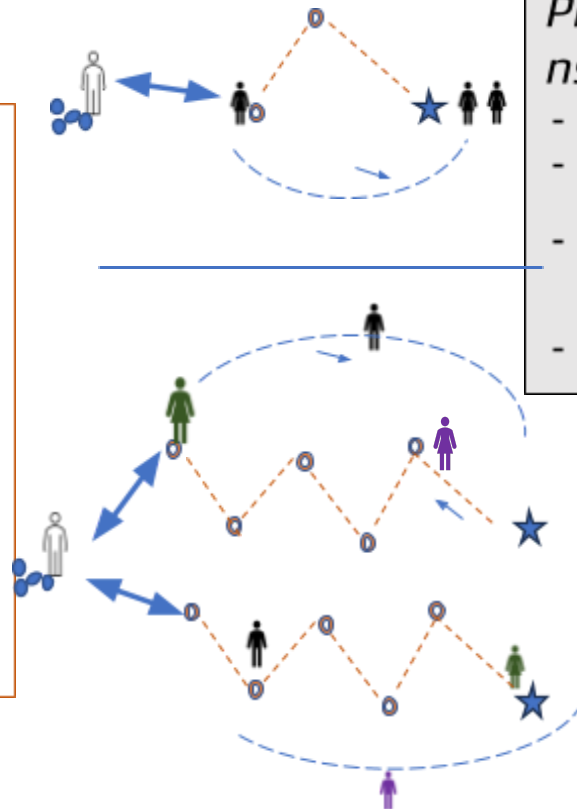
- o Set up a circuit to add movement before catching the throw
- o 2-3 lines with 3-4 players per line

Moving from Starting position to end (catching a throw from Coach):

- Shuffle/side step to each cone; pause, ready to catch... coach throws to player as they are getting to last cone

Moving back to the lineup:

Vary motor pattern: Run backward; Jump; one foot hop to return to start

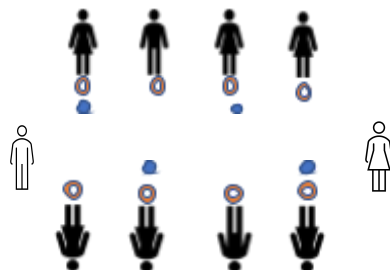


Progressions/Variations:

- Start with only 2 or 3 cones
- Start with only throwing to the player when they reach the final cone
- Progress to throwing each time they get to a cone (player stops, catches, then runs)
- Progress to throwing as they are getting to the cone

4. Catching: Play catch with a partner

- o All players line up beside a cone with no gloves
- o Show and practice 'Ready' position
- o Underhand toss to each other

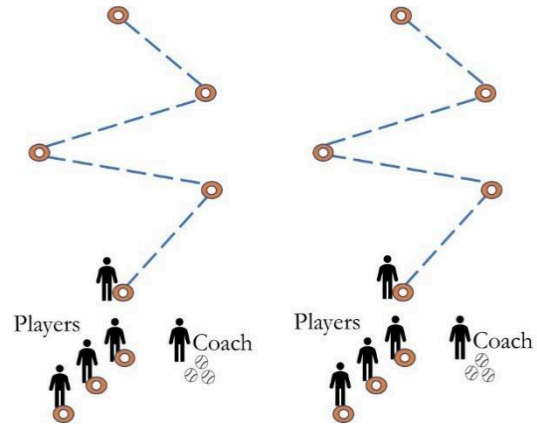


Progressions/Variations:

- Have player step back to throw further
- Have players catch with glove
- Have players throw overhand

5. Running / High Catch

- o Running:
 - o All Players line up in front of the first cone, run through dotted path as shown, second player goes after first player passes the second cone, etc. – players finish by running around to starting cone
 - o Second round - Focus on driving outside foot down, body compresses down to push to the side at each cone
 - o Third round – shuffle between cones
 - o Fourth round – crossovers between cones
 - o Fifth round – backing up to first cone then shuffle between middle cones, backing up to last cone
 - o Repeat any round if you think the players would benefit from it
- o High Catch:
 - o Demonstrate with player repeating High catch position – fingers up / triangle with gloves on
 - o Player starts by backing up to first cone, coach lob tosses up to player to catch (do catchable tosses) – focus on body centred catches – player throws back and runs through cones (shuffle/crossover/or straight – coach option) – forward lob toss to first cone on way back
 - o Can use Bean Bags or Tennis balls to start depending on the kids



Progressions/Variations:

- Use Tennis balls
- Use Incrediballs
- Use Baseballs
- Make it a race with points

Throwing Lessons

Key points

- **Smaller balls / bean bags** are easier to grip & throw than larger balls
- **Throw for distance** before throwing accuracy (to develop stronger body mechanics)
- **Focus on big movements** and body parts first (e.g. taking a step as they do their throw)
- Present cues (Ready-aim-throw) to help guide new throwers... but **don't over analyze it**
 - repetition is the best way to improve the skill

Equipment Needed:

- Agility Cones – 8 (spaced >3m) for players to stand at
- Row of agility cones for players to throw past
- Various Balls
 - o Tennis Balls – 1 bucket
 - o Bean bags (help hand position for smaller hands; fun for younger players)
- Hula Hoops for volunteers or coaches to hold up

Coaching Points:

- Encourage a step ('monster step') as they throw
 - o While eventually we want them to step with the opposite foot from throwing arm, start with encouraging any step!
- Bring your arm way back before you step and throw
- (Less instruction is better early!)

As players progress:

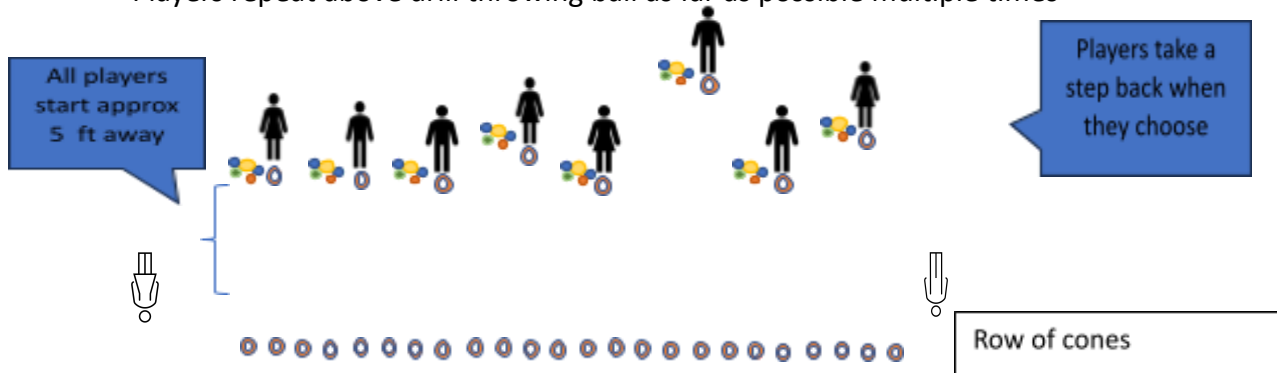
- 'Thumb to the thigh and show it to the sky' (ball comes down and back behind the head in a circular motion in preparation to throw)
- [Rally cap The Wheel](#) exercise is an exaggeration of the arm motion to help players think about full range of motion through the throw

Progressions/Variations:

- Start with wiffle balls, bean bags & tennis balls
- Progress to incrediballs/baseballs (note: bean bags & tennis balls can help smaller hands learn proper hand position – don't progress beyond these balls too quickly!)

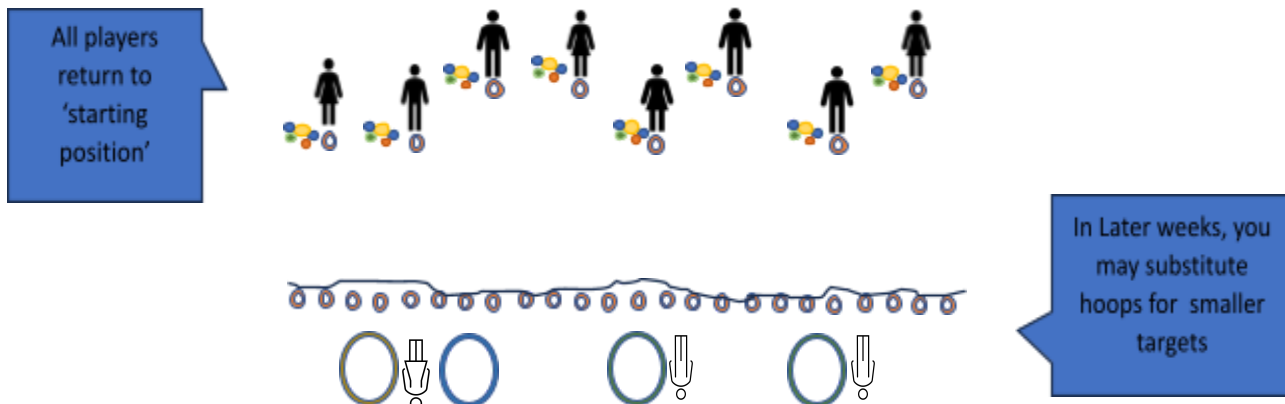
1. Throwing: Throw for distance

- All players stand at their own cone (each spaced out with six balls/bean bags) facing a long row of cones (tell players they can step a back any time they like!)
 - o Players throw one ball at a time until their pile is gone
 - o All players goes to retrieve their balls/bean bags
 - o Repeat twice
- Provide instruction
 - o Show Ready-Aim-Throw positions/motion
 - o Show the large step as you throw
 - o Show the throwing arm moving behind the head - 'thumb to the thigh and reach for the sky'
- Players repeat above drill throwing ball as far as possible multiple times



2. Throwing: Throw for accuracy

- Have volunteers (or coaches) hold up hula hoops and/or traffic cones where the rope
- Have players return to 'starting' position (approx. 5-7 feet from the line)
- Repeat instruction on how to throw
- Players throw one ball at a time until their pile is gone
- All players goes to retrieve their balls/bean bags
- Repeat twice (or more)



Optional Variations for later weeks (or to change it up a bit!)

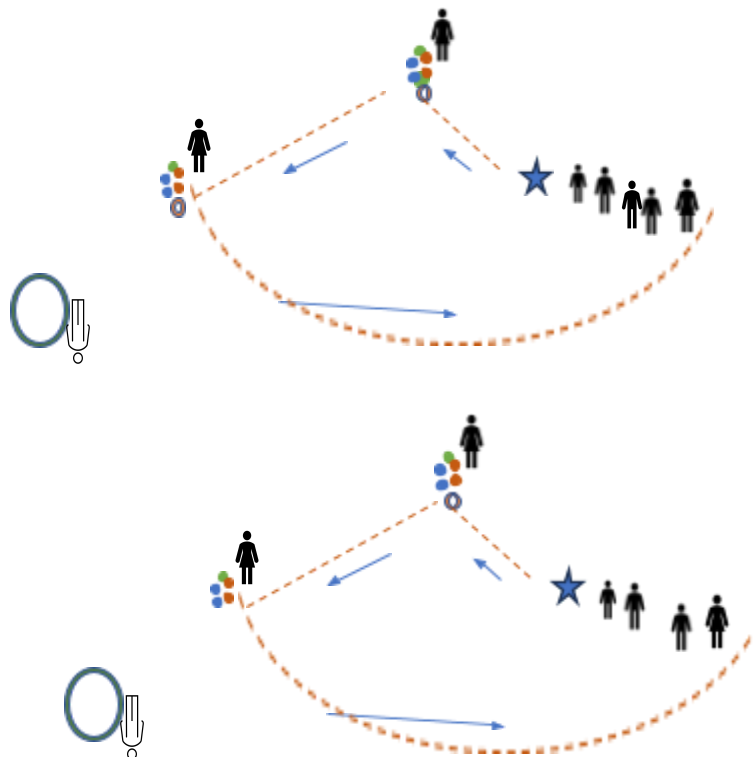
3. Throwing: One Knee Throwing

- Throwing hand knee on ground, glove-side knee/foot ('up' knee) pointing to target
- Ready-Aim position (hand facing away/back)
- Throwing hand flows through and down over the 'up' knee, rotating shoulder so that the throwing elbow goes over across the body and the 'up' knee

Same set up as above

4. Throwing: Run, Grab, Throw

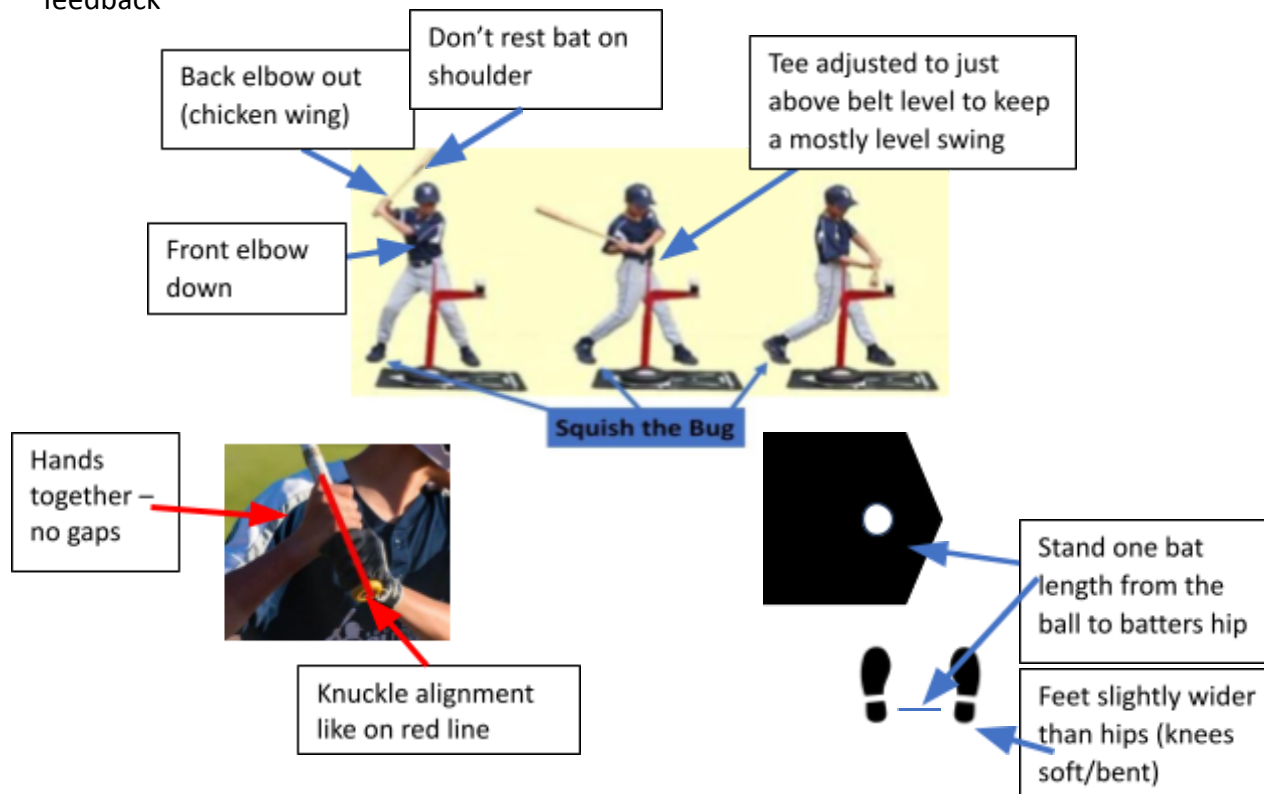
- 1st player runs to cone, picks up ball or bean bag and throws it towards/through hula hoop, returns to line
 - o While lines are not always ideal... this will move fast! So players can keep cycling through



Hitting Lessons

Key Points

- Encourage repetition for players to 'figure out' the feel of a swing before adding too much feedback



Tip: When giving a bat to each player hold it straight up and down and ask them to grip it with both hands together – if gripped right hand on top = righty / if gripped left hand on top = left

Safety

- ❖ only swing at home plate / standing at Tee
- ❖ Always wear a helmet when swinging
 - o note: helmet protects from bat swinging around and hit player in the back of the head (Blastball has foam bats so less concern)

Equipment Needed:

- Agility Cones – 6-8 (depending on # kids)
- Traffic Cones/Tee's (~10 – 1 per player on team)
- Wiffle balls – 1 bucket (all)
- Tennis balls – 1 bucket (Blast / T-Ball)
- Incrediballs – 1 bucket (T-Ball / Rookie)
- Baseballs – 1 bucket (T-Ball / Rookie)
- Bats bucket (Foam only for Blastball; Different lengths for T-ball)

1. Hitting: 'Between the two'

[Rally cap video of Between the two](#)

- All players have a bat – spread out (can be in a circle or semi-circle... avoid being close to Tees to avoid distractions)
- Coach Demonstrates proper hitting position
- Coach then shows exaggerations of each position – having players follow the movements while asking:
 - o Should my feet be closed or wide – players respond “between the two”
 - o Should my legs be straight or bent (demo full squat)
 - o Should my hands be high or low (position on bat is the same, placement of bat/hands varies)
 - o Should my bat be straight up, or sitting on my shoulder

Coaching Points:

- Keep feet wider than shoulders
- Hands stay back
- Have both hands together on the bat

2. Hitting: Hit from Tee

- Demonstration (see coaching points) for all players
- All players line up behind Tee's/cones (ensure there are enough Tees so nobody is waiting)
 - o 5 balls per tee
- Players practice (coaches / volunteers can help players set up balls on tee)
- After 5-6 hits, all players retrieve balls

Field

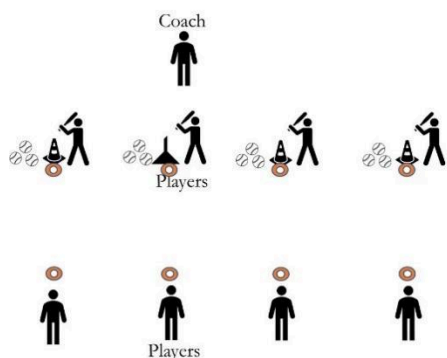


Coaching Points:

- Strong legs = stance front foot pointing at the middle of the “house” (middle corner of home plate)
- Good Grip = knuckles lined up, hands together, firm but no white knuckle hard grips
- Switch between small group feedback & individual feedback
- Encourage repetitions!

3. Hitting: Hit from Tee / Retrieve in field

- Demonstration (see coaching points) for all players
- ½ players line up behind Tee's/traffic cones, others behind agility cones to 'catch'/collect the balls to put them in a pile at their cone (don't cross the cones / fielders leave their bats at their cones)
- Before first 'hits', get players to line-up with Strong Legs, Good Grip and Bat Back – Flat Swing demo, repeat 5 times
- To switch, hitting players back up from Tee's/Cones – fielding players grab the Tee's/Cones to take to their pile of balls/spot to reverse direction, alternate as time permits

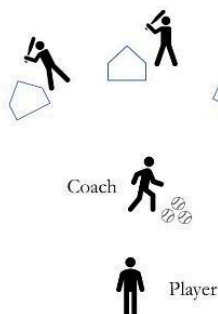


Progressions/Variations:

- Move to harder ball when ready
- Back foot 'squish the bug' twist
- Lead with the hip
- Slight lift of front foot pre-swing, small step forward with slight opening of front foot (unlocks rotation for hip twist)

4. Hitting: Wiffle Toss

- 3-4 players line up beside bases spaced out like below in an arch around the coach
- For safety - Make sure that left and right-handed batters do not have their backs to each other
- Coach tosses wiffle balls from kneeling position, 1 ball to each player at a time so that the players are not waiting too long between opportunities.
- Player behind coach is trying to catch them and give them back to the coach



Fielding Lessons

Key points

- Ready position
- Crocodile catch
- Glove opening up (not trapping ball down)
- Quick to get ball

Equipment needed:

- Agility Cones – 6 (more if >8 players)
- Various balls
 - o Wiffle balls
 - o Tennis balls
 - o Incrediballs (tball)
- Bases
- Polyspots

Coaching Points:

- Encourage ready position
- Focus on ball (where is it, where should it go next)
- Move to ball to retrieve
- Crocodile Catch

1. *Fielding/Grounders: Crocodile catch and Ready position*

- o See [Rally Cap Crocodile catch video](#)

Step 1: Instructions

- Gloves on all players (this will help young kids remember which hand they catch with)
- Coach Demonstrates 'ready position' (knees hip width, glove facing up, tap glove on ground)
 - o Practice 'ready position' a couple of times – “move your body around, wiggle it, turn around... and READY position... [players quickly get into position facing each other]
- Coach Demonstrates 'The Crocodile'
- o Practice 'The Crocodile' multiple times with an imaginary ball

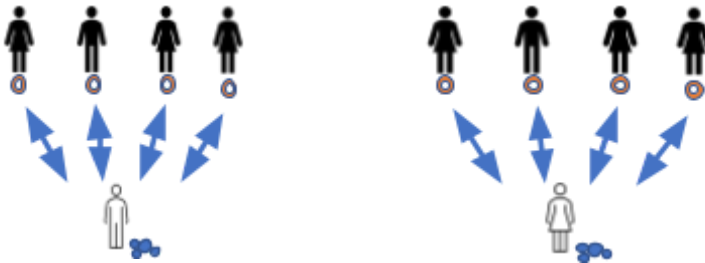
2. *Grounder / Crocodile catch*

Setup option 1:

- 3-4 players to one coach
 - o Players set glove beside them to start bare handed
 - o Coach rolls/throws grounder to player, player does
 - o Player rolls/underhand throws grounder to coach, crocodile (continues demo)

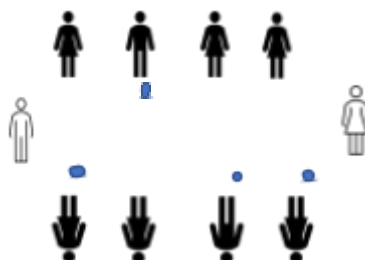
Progressions/Variations:

- On knees, no glove, imaginary ball
- On knees, no glove
- On knees, glove
- On feet, no glove
- On feet, glove



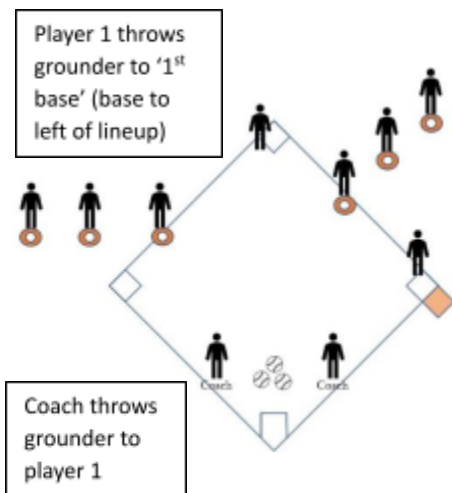
Setup option 2:

- Partners
 - o Players line up in pairs with gloves on facing each other
 - o Players practice mirroring 'READY position' with their friend; Players practice imaginary ball/crocodile
 - o Players pass ball back and forth practicing crocodile to catch / underhand throw/roll



3. *Fielding/Grounders: Throw to first*

- o Twin setups with 2 'first' bases
 - o Layout in field is just two parallel triangles with a coach throwing to a line of players and the 'first base' base set up to players' left.
- o Two coaches/parents feed underhand grounders to front of lines when 'fielder' is in Ready position
- o Players get into ready position, retrieve ball using 'crocodile', throw to first base



Progressions/Variations:

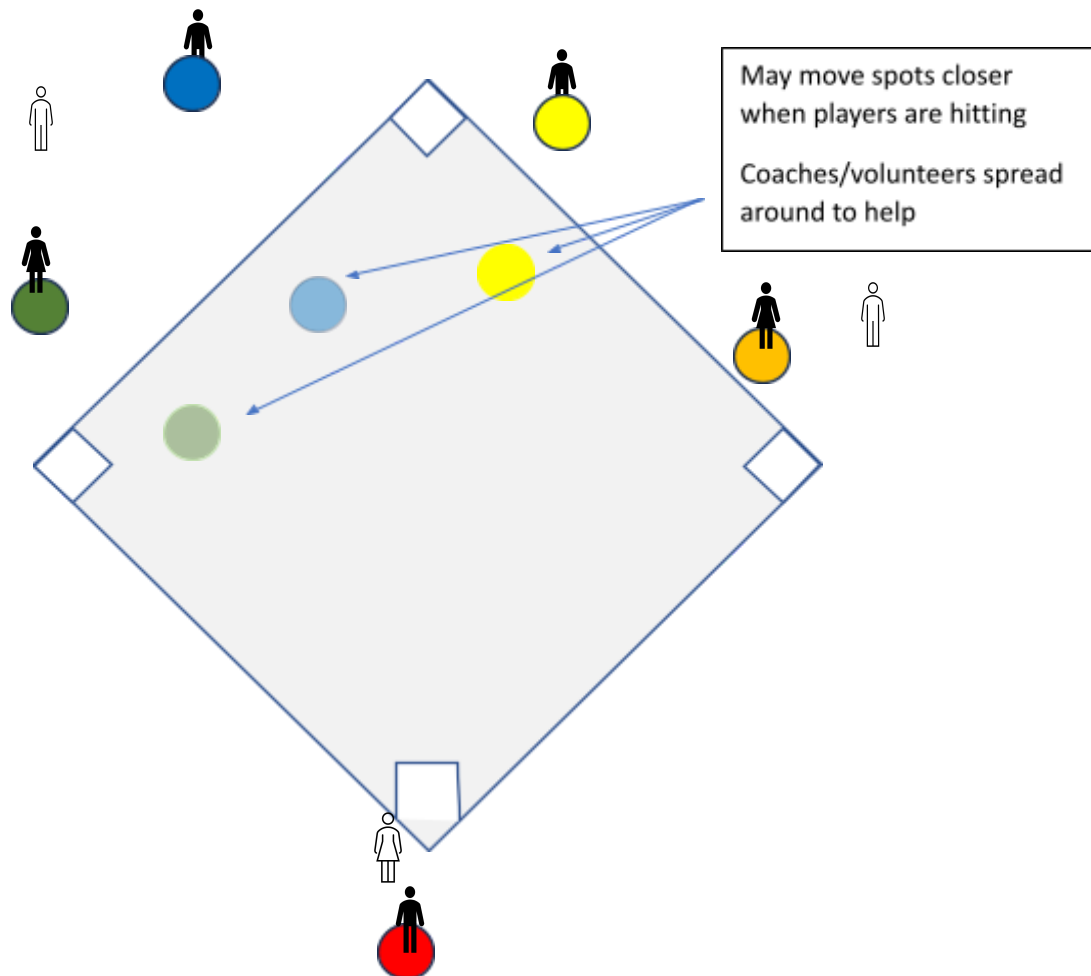
Early season: Ask for parent volunteer to be '1st base'. If only one coach, alternate which line you are throwing to. Later in season, you may put a player at 1st base!

- Players start stationary (similar to activity 1)
- Progress to players moving to the ball to retrieve
- Progress to players dropping to one knee to retrieve

Progress from wiffle/tennis balls to incrediballs

4. *Fielding: Positions*

- o Split team in half – 4-5 players will work on fielding, half will do another drill in the outfield
- o Set polyspots on field, each player stands on a colour
- o Coach 'hits' ball to players (vary the direction of hit so multiple players get a chance)
- o Players move to get ball
- o Player who retrieves ball, throws to first base
 - Player on first base catches and steps on the base
 - First base throws to catcher at home plate
- o Players return to their dot
- o Coach repeats
- o After every 2 hits, players rotate (Red, orange, yellow, green, blue)



5. Fielders vs Runners

- o Setup like above in Fielding: Positions
- o Split your team with Fielders on 1st, 2nd, Shortstop, 3rd and Catcher and Runners line up on the fence
- o Game Simulation
 - o Coach simulates a hit by throwing the ball as a grounder into the infield randomly
 - o Runner goes for first, challenge the Fielders to get “outs” by throwing or tagging the base (if closest) before the Runner gets there.
 - If Runner is out, they go back to end of the Runner line
 - If Runner is safe, they get to try to get to the next base similar to a game
- o Switch Runners and Fielders halfway through

Running Lessons

Key points

- o Players become familiar with bases and running around them
- o Players learn to run through first base (and outside the base)
- o Players learn to set up beside base getting ready to run to the next base

Equipment Needed:

- o All Bases
- o Honking Base
- o Agility Cones – 8 (spaced >3m)

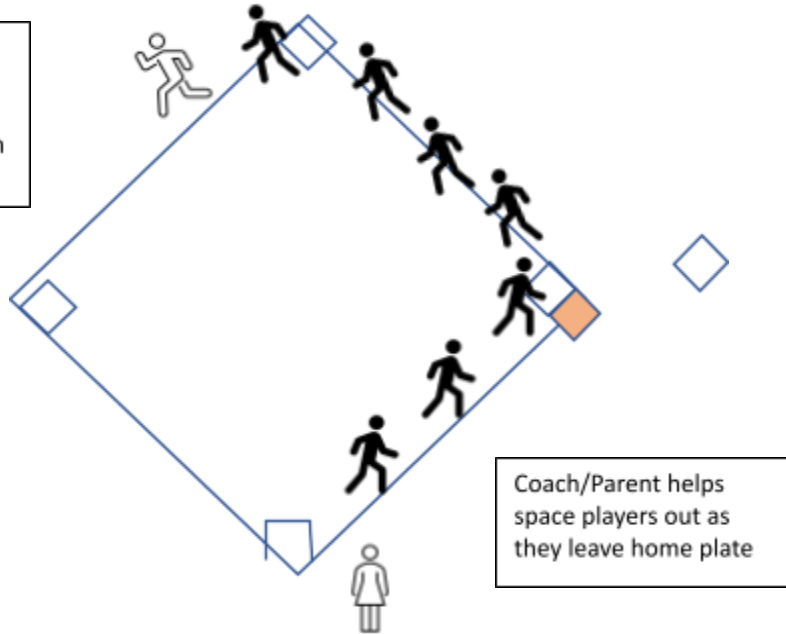
Coaching Points:

- Run through first and home base
- Stop at Second and Third
- Always “face the base you came from”
- Left foot touches the base you are running from

1. Running Bases: The Train:

- o [Rally Cap "Train" video](#)
- o Introduce Players to bases by walking (spaced out) around the diamond with them all as a team and ask them to shout out which base they are at
 - o Players should be 'spaced' running to ensure they have space to touch each base

Coach leads players around base, naming base each time (note: players say base # when they step on it)

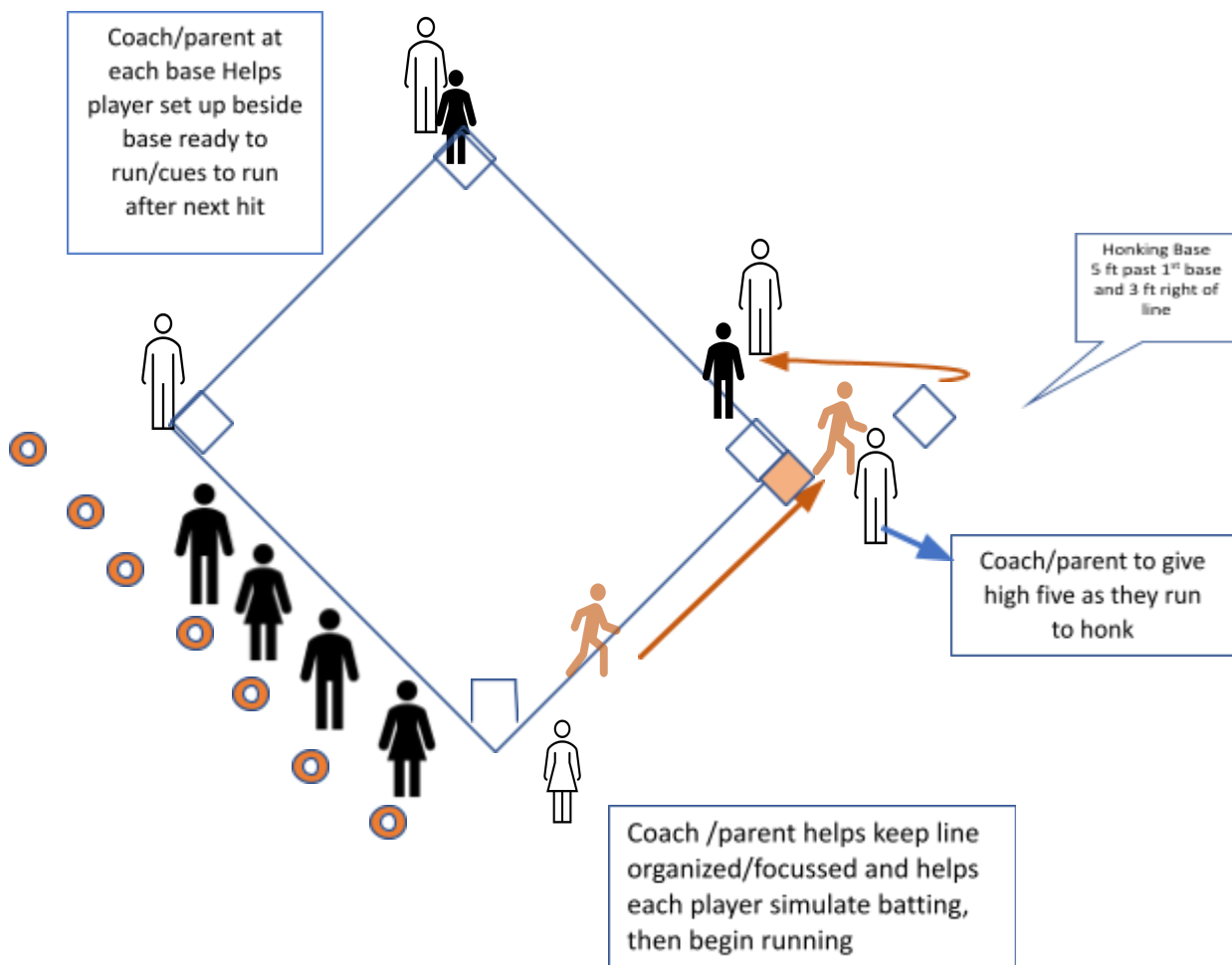


Variations:

- Racing the coach around the bases can be a fun variation – it can create a 'cluster' of players so it's tricky to make sure they've touched the base... therefore important to practice spaced train as well

2. Running Bases: Run through 1st, stop on other bases

- o Players line up at Agility Cones
- o Pretend swing then run through first stomping on base and running to honking base (Coach loud claps to simulate 'hit' noise)
- o Ready position on bases, runners run on coach clap, run one base at a time



Variations:

- Add in a real bat/swing
- Add in a real bat of a ball on a tee



Warm-ups and Games

Key Points

At 3-6 years old, players are 'learning to warmup', rather than 'needing to warmup' – this is an opportunity to:

- Have fun!
- Get players moving and excited about practice
- Teach players basic commands that you will use throughout practice
- Develop coordination & agility

Basic Commands (teach in warmup, practice throughout)

Stop/start commands every practice

- o "When I say go... Ready? Go!" (have players practice this; stop and reset the activity if they haven't waited for 'go')
- o "Freeze" – every time I say freeze, I want all of you to stop like a statue!
- o "Hustle in... 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1..."
- o Coach says "1-2-3" all players call out "eyes on me" – Coach says "1-2" all players call "eyes on you"
- o Coach says "If you can hear me touch your nose" "If you can hear me touch your head" "If you can hear me...."

Games to get the body moving

Move like animals:

- o Frog jumps (Full squat/hop forward)
- o Bunny hops (2 foot hops)
- o Cheetah (run)
- o Bird (Fly / flap arms)
- o Bear walk (hands and feet face down)
- o Crab walk (hands and feet walk face up) - A more advanced version of this is a fun start to sliding – see [rally cap "Crab dance" video](#)

"Frog Race"

- o Makes the animal moves into a game, with frogs 'racing' (or playing tag)
- o See [Rally Cap Frog race video](#)

"Kangaroo"

- o Players take turns doing running to an agility cone, picking it up and 'jumping' as far as possible – the cone is then put down and the players runs back to the starting spot for their partner to go

- o See [Rally Cap Kangaroo video](#)

"Volcanos & Craters"

- o Coach sets up space with half of the agility cones set up like 'volcanos' (regular) and half like 'craters' (upside down)
- o Coach (or coaches) try to flip all of the crater into volcanos while the kids try to turn them back over

"Clean your room"

- o Goal: Players get many repetitions of throwing (without thinking about it)
- o Set up a row of cones to divide an area of the field into 2 areas
- o Place similar numbers of balls (wiffle & tennis) and bean bags on each side
- o Players from each side are trying to 'clean their room' and throw all balls to the other side
- o Rules: No throwing at people
- o See [Rally cap "the Net" video](#) for a similar game (but over a fence)

Footwork

"Hit the deck"

Coach explains actions (pointing/demonstrating) explain "when I say..."

- o red - run forward
- o blue - run backward;
- o green - shuffle sideways (right);
- o yellow – shuffle sideways (left)" (try cross over as an extra challenge)
- o 'hit the deck' you lie on the ground
 - 'make a submarine' – bring one leg towards the sky (stretch hamstring)
 - 'make a cannon ball' – tuck into a tight ball
- o 'ai, ai captain' – stand up quick to salute coach
- o Add your own variations!

Balance activities (and something to change things up and refocus!)

"Up and Down"

- Every players stands beside an agility cone
- Player stands on one leg and leans down to balance the ball on top of agility cone
- Player stands back up!
- See [Rally cap Up & Down video](#)

"Freeze" or "statue"

- Have players move around (run, jump, hop, skip, shuffle etc)
- Call 'freeze' – players have to stop and make a pose
- Can vary the pose (e.g. statue with one hand touching the ground; make is a tall pose; make it a small pose)

Stretching

"Simon Says"

- Do arm circles
- Arm circles the other way
- Reach the sky
- Touch your toes
- Put your arm across your body
- Lunge forward

Obstacle Course

Get Creative 😊

Use a number of pieces of equipment/cones/dots to create a course with 3 or more steps. Ideally there are baseball movements or skills sprinkled throughout!

Over the Dugout

- Split teams into 2 equally on either side of dugout, equal by number and skill
- Each side starts with same number of tennis balls (for safety) – 2 or 3 per player
- Timed race to throw as many balls over the dugout to the other side
- Winner: Team with the least number of balls on their side
- Variations: Use Incrediballs or Baseballs as pairs to throw/catch for pair with highest number of throws and/or catches over within time wins
- For more skilled players, challenge them by setting cones further away from the fence to require longer throws