

Play Ball/LAFA Coaching Clinic

Throwing Drills

On all throwing drills. .always make sure to use 4 seams grip. (keeps ball straight and allows for extra carry)

Flick Drill: *Emphasizes wrist snap at end of throw to improve velocity and carry.*
Elbow in glove, use wrist **only** to throw ball to partner/wall. Elbow height equal to shoulder.

Drag Drill: *Emphasizes proper arm path.*
Sit Indian style hold ball on ground next to you. Drag ball up to the throwing position. Elbow height should be even with shoulder. Elbow should be bent at 90 degrees. Ball should be facing away from you. Glove pointed at target. Throw ball to partner/wall. Emphasize follow through.

One Knee Drill/Two Knee Drill: *Emphasizes proper follow through.*
One Knee: Throwing side knee is on ground.. Glove side leg is out front. Front side foot is in line with throwing side knee. Foot is closed to 45 degree angle.
Glove side arm/hand is up and pointing at target with slight bend in elbow. Throwing arm is in ready position....elbow equal to shoulder, elbow at 90 degrees, ball pointed away.
As player throws....he tucks glove into chest/armpit, releases ball and follows through with throwing hand/arm across front side leg.
Two Knees: On both knees facing partner. Glove side arm/hand is up and pointing at target with slight bend in elbow. Throwing arm is in ready position....elbow equal to shoulder, elbow at 90 degrees, ball pointed away. As player throws....he tucks glove into chest/armpit, releases ball and follows through with throwing hand/arm across glove side leg side leg.....”taking candy out of the pocket.”

Throwing Mechanics: *Emphasize proper arm path, stride and follow through.*

Set position: Player stands with throwing hand in glove. Feet in a straight line.

Break position: Player breaks hands with thumbs down....elbows are bent at 90 degrees and are also close to player’s side.

Up position: Player raises glove side arm and throwing arm up into ready to throw position. (glove side arm in equal to shoulder height, slightly bent and pointing at target...throwing arm height is equal to shoulder height, bent at 90 degrees and ball is pointing away.)

Step position: player takes short/straight stride toward target with glove side leg keeping weight back. Foot should stay in closed position or 45 degrees.

Throwing position: Player throws the ball making sure to tuck glove into chest and follow through with arm across front leg. Back leg should slightly pivot and may follow throwing arm forward slightly.

Good practice.....say set, break, up, step and then throw. Or say “break up step” all together once they get it....then throw

Playing catch....emphasize to always give a target and never throw the ball unless the other person gives you that target. Long toss is best way to improve arm strength.

Fun drills:

Points game: Play catch. If player hits partner in face/head area they get 2 points. If player hits partner above belt in the upper torso area, he gets one point. First person to ten wins.

Back em up three: Players stand in front of partner. Toss it back and forth one time. If ball is caught.....one partner backs up 3 steps. Do it again.....continue to back up 3 steps each time ball is exchanged. A partner team is out if the ball is dropped. Winner is last team standing.

Basic Catching Drill

For those coaches who have younger players or players struggling to just catch the ball.....this drill will help.

Stand in front of the player.....with or with out glove on....good idea to try both. From about 5 feet away, toss the ball to the player in different location. Right, left up and down teaching them to turn their hand/glove in the proper way. Good confidence builder.....back up as the players get better. Use softie balls or waffles if needed.

Fielding Mechanics/Drills

Fielding form

Ready position: (Athletic position) Feet shoulders width apart, feet slightly open, knees slightly bent and hands slightly open. When pitcher is throwing ball....take 2 small steps to get body moving.

To get into good fielding position: Feet shoulders width apart, feet slightly open, knees slightly bent. Hands on knees, then forearms on knees. Place glove out in front on ground forming a triangle shape with feet and glove. Form an alligator with bare hand and glove, head up. Back should be flat if possible.

Fielding position: feet shoulders width apart, knees bent, thighs about parallel to the ground. Glove on ground, out in front of feet, and in the middle of the stance. Form a triangle with the glove and feet. Throwing hand is above the glove hand...form an alligator.

Receiving the ground ball: As ball enters glove, close the alligator, bring the ball into the belly button and look the ball in with your head.....should not see players face. “Button to button.”

Moving right and left for ground balls: When ball is close....shuffling is fine. When ball is far, pivot on foot closest to ball and cross over to run to the ball... break down to field the ball.

Drills:

Fielding mechanic drills: Player's partner up and stand across from each other about 15 feet. Roll ball to each other and work on technique only.

Break down drills: Have kids line up. Say go...they run until you say field....they then get into good fielding position. Continue to do it.

Regular ground balls: Hit routine balls and work on form....don't hit ball too hard. You may even roll the ball.

Ground balls left and right: Hit balls left and right working on proper pivot to ball.

Wooden glove: Teaches soft hands, straight glove, bring ball in and alligator.

No glove: Roll ball to player. Have them bring it in using good technique and soft hands.

Fielding and throwing

When fielding a ball and throwing it to a player/base. player should be moving toward that base with good foot work.

Drills

Field and ready to throw drill: Field ball... first step is with throwing hand side foot in forward direction toward target. (short step!) Next step is with glove hand side foot...step in line with throwing foot in direction of target. (weight back)

While performing this second step....."break up step" occurs (see above). Then throw and follow through.

To test that kids are moving forward...line them up in straight line and make sure they are moving toward their target when they position to throw.

Rapid Fire drill: Empty bucket of balls. Line up players in single file. Put empty bucket next to the players. Coach rolls balls to the players rapidly..... as the player is catching the ball..... the next ball is rolled so the players are moving quickly. Once fielded the balls are placed in the bucket. Use this for right and left grounders as well. Great way to get lots of grounders and work on form.

Four corners: Need 4 coaches. 2 coaches on the first base line hitting to 3rd and short. 2 coaches on third base line hitting to 1st and 2nd. Have the third baseman or shortstop throwing to first base. Other fielders throw the ball back to the coach. Have a player or coach catching the throws from the position you chose to throw across the diamond. Rotate the lines so each group of players has a chance to throw to first. There will only be 3-4 players per line so it is another good drill to get lots of reps. If only 3 coaches/parents available to help.....go with 3 lines

Fly Ball/Pop-up Drills

Regular fly ball drills: Stand in front of player. Throw ball in air to them. Make sure they catch it with 2 hands and have arms bent. No back peddling.

Right and left fly ball drills: Have player in front of you. Throw ball over their left or right shoulder. Make sure they drop step with the foot closest to the ball and run to the ball trying to turn back to the field to catch it if possible.

Football pass drill: Line up players and throw them passes with the baseball having them run to catch it. Fun drill!

Tennis racket drill: Use a tennis racket and tennis balls to hit pop ups. For the older kids...have a contest to see who can catch the ball.....hit them high for a fun challenge. Good for confidence in the younger kids as well.

Fielding ground balls in the outfield (3 ways)

One Knee: drop to one knee to field ballot make sure ball does not get through.

Charge and breakdown: Charge ball then chop steps to slow down. Then field ball in normal ground ball fashion.

Do or die. Charge ball hard fielding it off to the glove side and then bringing it up to the throwing hand. Come up throwing.

Hitting

Stance

Hands/arms: Knocker knuckles lined up or close to it. Loose grip on bat. Keep hands at top of strike zone. Bat knob is pointing to other batters box. (bat at 45 degree angle) Elbows are down. Hands are lined up over back foot.

Feet: Shoulders width apart, knees slightly bent, feet are in straight line, toes pointing straight, weight on balls of feet. (no toes and heels!)

Stride: Weight back (65% back foot...35% front)

Stride is soft, slow, straight, short and shallow. (5 S's) Foot is closed (toes straight). "Heel to the pitcher." Stride onto big toe/ball of foot...heel slightly off ground.

Swing: Hands stay inside the ball (knob of bat leads the swing). Head stays down on the ball hitting the bat. Head moves from front shoulder to back shoulder (Mike to Ike). Pivot back foot onto toes/ball of foot.

Drills

Batting tees: Say stance stride swing. (work on all concepts separately)

Soft toss: Kneel at 45 degree angle and toss ball to hitter. Pre stride as well if player needs to work on stride.

Stride drill: Hold bat on player's front shoulder, when striding, bat should not move forward.

Flick drill: Start in stance begin swing.....start hands toward hitting zone, slight pivot. Flip ball.....player finishes swing and pivot.

Open stance: Player faces net/screen, turns shoulders to instructor. Flip ball...player swings with hands keeping bat up and following through toward the net. Feet stay planted.

Pivot Drill: Pivot completely on back foot. Keep hands back. Flip ball to hitter...hitter swings.

Wiffle Ball Circle Drill: Circle kids around coach.....toss ball to each kid and then move on to the next player and continue around the circle until balls are out.

Structure of the practice.

Try to be prepared. Take a few minutes to set up what you are going to do at practice.

Have it time lined. Ask for help. The more help the better.

Keep the kids moving. Run stations. Keep some routine in your practices. Start each practice the same way. (run and stretch, then throwing mechanics, then play catch...etc)

Keep it fun by having contests. Have a designated place to play catch for routine, discipline and safety. (right or left field line) Baseball is about routines, having a routine makes you feel prepared. Baseball is about muscle memory caused by repetition of good mechanics. Work on situations at every practice to teach the kids the game. More importantly.....always do the basics at each practice as well.