

BATTING DRILLS FOR U8

Self Toss Drill

This is a partner drill using whiffle balls. One batter one fielder, the batter self tosses the ball and hits it to the fielder. Distance between the partners depends on how far the batter can hit the whiffle. Give each girl about 5-10 wiffles, then switch.

60 seconds

What you do is, get someone to time the player for 60 seconds and make them swing as many times correctly as possible. While you are timing the player make sure each swing is done correctly.

Front Barrier Drill:

Have the batter stand one bat length from a barrier (I prefer a net to prevent damage to the bat, but you can use a fence). Have her take her normal swing. If she hits the barrier, she is unlocking her elbows before her shoulders and getting wide on the swing.

Rear Barrier Drill:

Place a barrier directly behind the batter and have her take her normal swing. If the bat hits the barrier, she is dropping her hands. You can use this barrier even when you are using a pitching machine or live pitching for instant feedback to the batter that she is dropping her hands.

Basketball Drill

This is a great drill for teaching follow-through. Get a couple of old basketballs and take most of the air out of them. Place them on one of those orange cones you see at construction sites. Have the batter take her normal swing and follow-through right through the basketball. HAVE THEM WEAR HELMETS!!! Use regular sized bats for this drill.

Knee hitting drill

Set up a net with a mat in front of it. Place a medium size orange cone on the mat. Have the hitter kneel on their back knee. The front leg should be straight out in front towards the net. Place a ball on the cone and have them hit. This allows them to concentrate on the proper hand and arm movement without worrying about the legs. I have one player hit and the other feed the balls. This allows me to concentrate on the hitter and keeps the players involved.

Soft toss drill

Hitting a softie/whiffle into a fence or net, coach kneels to the side of the batter—out of swing distance and tosses the ball to the batter who uses the proper swing and hits the ball into the fence/net

For the Dad's

I have many fathers that think baseball swings and softball swings are the same. I had a clinic and we had the fathers do this drill. I took nerf footballs and cut them in half, we had the fathers place them under their shirts. We then had the fathers put their elbows up and their hands high. The classic baseball type swing. We then had the dads swing at wiffle balls on the tee. Most fathers knocked out the right half of the football. Their elbows hit it every time. We showed the fathers that their girls have to swing around their own body and it is useless to have a girl place her hands, elbows, and shoulders above her center of gravity and power zone. We have the babies, so all of our power is in our hips and down. The fathers finally realized there is an anatomical difference to hitting a fast pitch softball.

INFIELDING DRILLS FOR U8

2-glove drill

Have a player get into ready position with their feet spread just wider than shoulder width. Place a glove next to each foot inside the player's stance. Roll a ball directly at the player and they will learn to field the ball with their feet spread. The fielder will field the ball without her glove, this helps her to focus on the ball.

Bat-in-front drill

Player starts in ready position, place a bat about 6 inches in front of the player on the ground. The coach rolls a ball at the player who must field the ball in front of the bat. This helps the player field the ball in front of their bodies for balance and vision. Can be done with or without a glove.

Stationary ball drill

When fielding a ground ball, approach it like an airplane landing on a runway. The fielder should get lower as the ball gets closer. Balls are positioned on the ground around the infield, the player approaches each ball working on lining up their belly button with the ball. By eliminating ball movement, the player has a greater chance of executing the drill for fielding the ball correctly.

The Backhand Technique.

Only backhand what you can't get around in front of

Use the cross over step, point the glove elbow at the target, bend both knees, field the ball close to the ground and out in front of the front foot.

Using a tennis ball/whiffle—have the fielder face a wall about 4 feet away without a glove. Someone stands behind her and throws a ball to the far right of the wall (if she's a righty) so that it bounces just out of reach—enforce the backhand technique to field the ball. Once they get the technique down, you can try it with gloves.

Flip Drill

Each player has their glove and a ball. Place the ball in a snow cone position in the glove. Player 1 flips the ball to player 2. Player 2 catches the ball and immediately flips it back to player 1. This drill helps young players control their glove.

Line Drill

Take the fielders and line them up in a straight line. With plenty of space in between each one, line them up one behind the other away from the coach. Number each player such that the first person is number one, second is number two, and so on. To execute the drill, the coach hits a hard grounder and calls one of the numbers at the same time. That number must field it, while the others step out of the way. The coach should randomly vary the numbers, so that each fielder has a chance to field a grounder and none can predict whose turn it is. This drill teaches quick reflexes and clear thinking under pressure.

OUTFIELDING DRILLS FOR U8

RELAY THROW DRILL

Have the player's line up in a line stretching to the outfield. Have the first player throw the ball to the glove side of the second player in the line. Do the same for the rest of the players. Once they get the drill, you can form teams and do a relay race.

This teaches the proper location for the relay throw and also teaches quick turn and release of the throw.

STAR DRILL

The fielder stands about 20 yards away from the thrower. The fielder runs to the right and makes the catch, then drops the ball and hauls it over to the far left, makes the catch, drops the ball, then runs away from the thrower for the long ball, catches it, drops it, and runs straight towards the thrower for the shallow ball and that's it.

SELF TOSS DRILL

Player uses a softie and tosses the ball into the air themselves and practices catching the ball. It is a very basic drill but it creates a safe and controlled environment for the player.

Volleyball Drill

High to the sky, down to the ground. This drill helps players determine whether to hold the glove up or down while fielding a fly ball. You need two players standing opposite each other, no gloves. The tosser has a volleyball and will toss the ball above the waist and below the waist. If it is above the waist the player must catch the ball with finger tips high to the sky, if the ball is thrown below the waist, the player must catch the ball with fingers down to the ground. (Catching a ball right at the waist should be caught with fingers high to the sky—knees bent!!). transition into using a glove and softball.

Outfield Ground Ball Drill

Work on proper fielding of ground balls: Hit grounders to the outfield. Knee down, field the ball off the throwing foot, followed by a strong and accurate throw.

Charge/Drop Back Drill

Work on the ability to catch a fly ball while running full speed in and then catching a fly ball while running back.

A player lines up in front of a thrower. The thrower tosses a fly ball in front of the player who charges in, catches the ball and throws it back to the thrower. The thrower then throws a fly ball over the payers head (left or right) so the players has to drop step, run back to catch it. The player then returns the ball to the thrower. After four throws switch player and thrower.

SPEED, STRENGTH AND AGILITY DRILLS U8

High Knees - Pick up your knees as high as you can *and* as fast as you can! You don't have to go far ~ 10 yards will do. REMEMBER the goal is *not* to get from start to finish as quickly as possible. The goal is to pick up your knees as many times as you can in the 10 yards that you do the drill. This is a *speed* drill ~ Don't be lazy! Pick up those knees as fast as you can!

Butt Kicks - Like High Knees, 10 yards is enough for this speed drill. Instead of picking up your knees, kick your butt with your heel. Again, going the 10 yards quickly isn't the goal. To increase speed, "Kick your butt" as many times as you can in the 10 yards that you do this drill.

Base running

Time all your players from home plate to first base. Do this twice. Average each player's time. Pair up two closest times, placing one player at plate and one about ten feet behind. Have them race around all four bases. Do this for the entire team. We always go twice with the pairs switching their starting spots the second time.

Leap Frog

Have your players lay on the ground in a circle with their heads toward the middle of the circle. Designate a player to start the action. When she starts, she gets up and runs over every player in the circle until she gets to an open spot (vacated by the first player she has run over) and then she lays down on the ground (usually falls down). After the starter has run over the FIRST player on the ground, SHE gets up and runs over every player until she finds an open spot (vacated by the FIRST player SHE has run over) and then lays down. When played right, you will have 3 or 4 girls running over players and falling down at all times. The players love this game and it is a good warm-up exercise.

Tennis ball drill

Squeeze a tennis ball with each hand. Sets of ten. Start with one set, build up to ten sets with one minute rest between sets.

Explode Drill

Get in ready position on a base. Explode off the base. Drive strongly for at least five steps. Repeat 5-10 times.

Swing Drill

Swing a bat at an imaginary pitch and sprint twenty yards as if you were running to first base. Repeat 5-10 times

Line Hops

Do fifteen line-hops. Begin with both feet together on one side of a line. Then hop over the line with both feet and back over the line to the starting position. Do this as fast as possible.

Push-ups

Do ten regular full body push-ups.

Sit-ups

Do ten stomach crunches.

THROWING DRILLS U8

MECHANICS SERIES DRILL

This throwing drill is used for warm ups and is done in a series. It allows the players to focus on the "mechanics" of proper throwing techniques, using certain isolation drills.

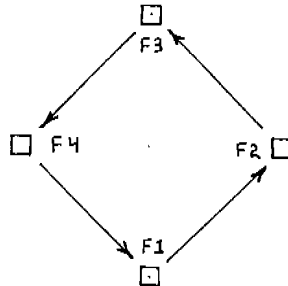
- 1.) Indian style: have the players start across from their partners sitting Indian style. Players should use only the wrist, no arm motion—this is the wrist snap.
- 2.) One Knee: Have the players proceed to the one knee position, stride leg in front pointing glove towards their partners. The players should move back to approx. 15-20 yards. This focuses on upper body mechanics and accuracy. Again, the players should follow through with their throwing elbows outside their knee.
- 3.) Standing: From the standing position. Again, emphasize using the glove hand to point at the target as well as proper follow through (throwing wrist should brush the outside of the knee).
- 4.) Crane: Players begin in the "crane" position. That is, with their stride leg raised in the air (knee bent), their glove hand pointing at their target, their throwing hand in the launch position (ball outside ear), players hold in this position for 2-3 seconds before releasing the ball. To ensure proper follow through, the players then take one full step towards their partner after releasing the throw. This helps the players focus on properly using their glove hand for emphasis on shoulder hip and knee rotation. What I tell the girls is that (if righty), their left shoulder, hip and knee point at their target and when they are done, their right shoulder hip and knee should be pointing at their target.
- 5.) Tags: While partners are working their "Crane" positioning, the receivers set up in the straddle position. When the throw comes in, they perform sweep tags. This allows the receivers to train as well as the throwers.
- 6.) Throwing for distance: Once the series has gone through, continue to have the players back up until they are able to make accurate, strong throws DIRECTLY to the receiver. No lob throws. This allows arm strengthening.

WARM-UP DRILL

We use this drill to warm up before games and practices. Start with 10 wrist snaps (see above), 10 throws on one knee (see above), 10 standing throws (see above), 10 grounders, 10 pop-ups. This is not a race—girls need to use the proper form or you should go back to the Mechanics Series Drill above.

SQUARE DRILL

(Teaches quick hands/feet work and throwing & catching.)



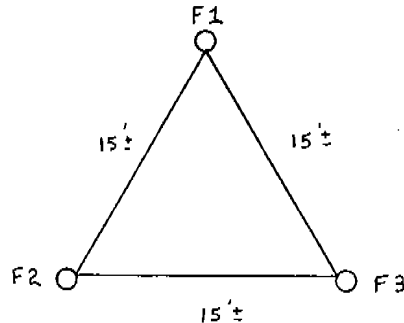
FIELDER 1 throws to Fielder 2 to Fielder 3 to Fielder 4 to Fielder 1. (Clockwise and counter clockwise).

VARIATIONS:

- 3 Players at each position alternating.
- 3 Players alternating after their throw they sprint to the end of the line they just threw to.
- Time the team at different stages during the year to show their progress.

TRIANGLE DRILL

(Teaches front and backhand flips, quickness and coordination.)



Start with a bucket of balls dumped at F1's feet - give bucket to F3. F1 rolls ball to F2 who then tosses a backhand to F3 who puts the ball in the bucket. Hint roll balls only as fast as players can field the ball and toss correctly. As soon as all balls and tossed have F3 roll to F1, etc. There are many variations of this drill - use your imagination.