

Warm-Up Plan Index

<u>Plan Page Description</u>	<u>Page Number</u>
Pre-Game Warm-up (Game Day):	2
Pre-Game Warm-up (Pitching):	5
Between Inning Warm-Up:	7

Pre-Game Warm Up

*Make sure your pre-game warm up is getting your team **confident**, prepared, and ready to win!*

Everybody has to have a pre-game warm up, but what makes a good pre-game warm up? And how do you know if your warm up is good, no matter what age or level of team you coach?

The biggest thing your pre-game should do is prepare your team for the game. While that sounds obvious nothing in that statement says it has to take a certain amount of time, or involve specific equipment or space, but only that it prepares your team for the upcoming game.

Pre-game warm-up should be taking place off the shale. Do your warm-ups in the outfield. Pitchers and catchers can warm up in the foul territory on the shale, inside the 1st or 3rd foul line.

Let's look at what needs to happen in order for your team to be prepared for the game:

1. Get your Players Stretched and Warmed Up
2. Get your Players Physically Ready (throwing, defense, hitting)
3. Get your Players Mentally Ready (CONFIDENCE!)
4. Get your Pitchers Physically and Mentally Ready
5. Deal with Game Details (position assignment, checking out the playing surface, wind direction and how it might effect pop-fly's, sun and how it might effect offense or defense, fence and backstops, review signals, pitch calling details with your catcher/pitcher, discussing special coverages with your infielders, and any signal or key changes, etc...)

How long these things take will vary based on factors such as the age of your team, the number of games you've played that same day and the stage in your season. Once you figure out a warm up that successfully gets your team ready to play then you'll want to stick to it and simply adapt it to the time & space you have that day.

Space and Time are the 2 factors that will influence your pre-game warm ups the most so remember to be as creative as possible when it comes to these.

Focus:

You and your players will enter warm ups with broad focuses coming out of life and entering the game so the idea of warm ups is to take that broad focus and narrow it by the time warm ups are over.

Throwing:

Consider having your players warm up their arms closer to actual game time instead of always doing your throwing warm ups at the beginning and then letting their arms get cold. Instead of always throwing back and forth in pairs and getting lazy feet, consider doing a drill like Zig Zag as a throwing warmup and either crowding in or spacing out based on how much room you have.

Hitting:

Have the focus be building confidence. Remember that you're warming your players up to hit in a game which means they'll be hitting balls coming at them in the air, not worrying about back elbows or specific parts of their swings, so minimize the number of hitting drills you do or eliminate them all together.

If you feel like you must do some hitting drills then only do 2 or 3 and let each player pick their favorite ones - again, pre-game warm ups are about getting ready for the game by building confidence and getting warm, it's no longer the time to try and build swings and make mechanical corrections.

To get them ready to hit pitched balls do whatever form of front toss your space & facilities allow, but remember - BUILD CONFIDENCE! Give them good pitches to hit and easy pitches or tosses that let them hit it hard. Now is a time when it's ok to "end on a good one" and to have "just one more". Front tossing whiffle balls from about 5-7 feet in front of your hitters is great if that's all the space you have. Be careful not to go 100 miles an hour with your tosses! It's not about speed of the toss or how many tosses you can do in 30 seconds! Letting your hitters have 5 good, solid hits does way more for their confidence than quickly giving them 20 crappy tosses of which they barely hit 6. Think about it - how long should it take for each of your hitters to have 5 good front toss hits? Maybe 10 minutes.

Defense:

Space may not let you actually hit grounders and flyballs to your players but that doesn't mean they still can't get defensively ready. Have your players split up into pairs and roll grounders or toss flyballs to each other to get themselves ready.

Pitchers:

Each pitcher should know how long it takes her to get warm so they should start warming up separately from the team to ensure they are completely warm 3-5 minutes before game time.

Other:

Go over any strategic factors that will impact the game in the first few innings, announce the lineup and any signal or key changes and then let everyone chill for a bit. Leave the speeches for the politicians. A smile is an amazingly powerful message to let your players know you're confident and that you believe in them!

Now let's look at a pre-game warm up:

U13 and Younger Time	Warm-up Activity	Details
5 min	Review Field (Coach)	Need 1 coach: This can be a coach and discuss with team prior to game at team meeting. Review field conditions for fielders (infield/outfield), wind direction for positioning, and sun reflection (remind them to wear sunglasses) for offense and defense.
5 min	Dynamic Stretching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run to outfield fence glove tucked in • High knees (half field) • Lunges (half field) • Arm Circles/Windmills (in line) • Jumping jacks (10) 	Player led: Have a player lead. Gets the body and footwork warmed up. Have them clap hands after each set completion.

10 min	Warm up arms and throwing Run throw all throwing stages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrist snaps • Throw with feet in place • Add step to throw • Full throws 	Player led: Throw to each other in the outfield in 2 lines.
10 min	Hitting Warm Up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitting off the T into a net • Bunting (whiffle balls) • Soft toss (net) 	Need 2-3 coaches: Have pitchers go first. Rotate 2 players at a time. Front toss: Throw meatballs & build confidence Drills: 2-3 drills for each player
10 min	Defensive warm up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If limited on time groundballs for infielders and flyballs for outfielders 	Need 1-2 coaches (1 to hit balls, 1 to receive ball): Groundballs should be reminding them of 5 step to fielding. Flyballs should pay attention to footwork and chasing down the ball.
25 min	Pitcher's warm up	Need 1 coach (to set-up, monitor, and correct pitching mechanics), 2 pitchers, and 2 catchers: Happens while defense are warming up.
5 min	Warm up wrap up team meeting	All: Line-up, opponent pitcher summary, field notes, review signals, pick captains*. Have girls get in circle ready for cheer waiting for captains to come back.

Your pre-game warm up should take anywhere from 45 to 60 minutes. Warming up for 2 hours not only seems extreme, but might be a sign of inefficiency. More isn't always better, and that's especially true when warming up for a game.

Some final thoughts:

- The more tired your team is the less your team will need to warm up. This might be a result of having played a lot of games already that same day, or maybe it's extremely hot or humid, or it could be really late in the season and your team is just physically tired. Keep your finger on the pulse of your team and when they are tired, they can still do the same things, just don't do them as long - shorten up your usual warm up.

*Before the start of the game, the head coach and 1-2 players (captains) meet at Homeplate with the Umpire and the head coach and 1-2 captains of the opposing team.

Pitching – Pre-game Warm Up

It is very important that coaches ensure there is adequate time to warm up their pitchers. Improper warm-up could result in injury to the pitcher.

Wrist Flicks:

Use just your wrist, if possible, minimizing hip rotation (tell them to square up their hips) 10-20 of these should suffice for a warm up. When they start throwing other pitches, they can use this drill to practice their releases for those pitches

T's:

Relaxed arm position (it's more natural and realistic than a stiff arm) can be done without the stepping and dragging to isolate the arm movement, 10-20 of these should suffice.

K's:

- This picture below is a pretty good K position. This pitcher is a bit more advanced, so her weight isn't as far backwards because she's focusing more on leaping off of the mound, elongating the "K."
- Hips should be completely open, and stay open until the arm has gone through on the power line, the hips slamming "shut" shortly after that.
- Arm swings down on a straight line up, back, and following through (make sure that their arm doesn't wrap back past their shoulders, it should be on the power line the whole way through (imagine that the power line is a plane that extends straight up into the air, the ball should stay on that plane).
- Weight transfers from the back foot to the front foot, with the knees coming together at the end. Make sure the weight transfer is coming from the hips and shoulders moving, not leading with the head (or "turtling").
- At the end of the pitch, the arm should have followed through straight and close to the body, the knees and feet should be together squared up to the catcher, and the girls should be pretty well balanced at the end.

Coaching in a Game

If it goes too far inside/outside:

- If the hips close too soon, the arm could either come across the hips to overcompensate and go inside, or hit the hip and go too far inside.
- The foot could not be stepping straight out- have the girls draw a power line and have the foot stepping out (left foot for rightys) be right on there.

If it goes too high:

- The release point could be too late.

If it goes too low:

- The release point could be too early.

Reminder of the rules for pitching legally:

- Push off foot needs to be on the mound at the beginning. Back foot can be off the mound.
- "Crow hopping" is allowed as of the 2022 season, meaning the drag foot no longer has to stay in contact with the ground.
- The hand can only go in the glove once when on the mound- called "set position". The count is 2-5 seconds then pitch must occur.

Pitching Distances:

U9	30 feet	11" indoor softie ball
U11	35 feet	11" softball
U13	38 feet	11" softball
U15	40 feet	12" softball
U17	43 feet	12" softball
U19	43 feet	12" softball

Between Inning Warm-Up

OK your team has just taken the field for their defensive half of the inning. How do they use that time? Do they walk onto the field or do they jog? Is the catcher in the dugout looking for her gear and does the pitcher have to warm up by throwing to the third baseman? Why can't the right fielder find her glove? Why do these times in the game often look like a disorganized fire drill before every inning?

Let's go over some things your team should be doing in order to get the most benefit from their defensive half of an inning.

Here is an all too typical youth fastpitch scene: The infielders walk, and sometimes it looks like they're dragging, to their positions and the catcher is in the dugout getting her gear on.

The middle infielders are together on the grass taking ground balls from the first baseman and they are flipping them to her. They are flipping them to her because they are only about 10 feet away.

And they are using poor fielding and throwing mechanics. They just bend over and let the ball roll into their gloves because the first baseman just rolls the balls to them.

The outfielders only get in one or two throws because of overthrows and missed balls and the fact they walked to their outfield positions and the fact that all three are playing catch together.

The catcher, after finally getting her gear on walks up to the plate, takes one pitch and the umpire suddenly calls "Balls in." The catcher throws down to second and the ball sails into the outfield where the center fielder who is not paying attention lets it get by her.

The umpire says, "Play Ball". Are your players really ready to play?

A team can get in important and needed game-type repetitions if they will take this time in the game seriously.

10 reps per inning x 5 innings per game x 35 games = extra 1,750 reps. If your player takes an extra 1,750 ground balls or fly balls, will she be a better player?

Here are some ways they can do it better and improve their pre-inning infield.

- All players should put their gloves in the same place in the dugout, every time. (the reason why in the next tip)
- When a player is left stranded on base his nearest position teammate should 'pick her up.' This means she should bring her teammate's glove with her onto the field so there will be no time wasted. How does she know where that glove is? Because everybody leaves their gloves in the same place in the dugout. (The nearest base coach can bring her batting helmet back to the dugout.)
- Everybody runs onto the field. Coaches have to reinforce this because the tendency in the late innings or when a team is behind in the score is to drag a little bit. When do you most need your players to be alert and lively and ready? In the late innings. They have been sitting in the dugout so it is necessary for them to get the blood flowing. Jogging onto the field accomplishes that. It also looks like they came to play.
- Four (4) girls should grab balls for warm-up (Center Fielder, First Baseman, Reserve Player, and Pitcher)

"Nothing great was ever accomplished without enthusiasm." Players should run to their positions (no walking or light jogging).

- A coach must be ready to catch with the pitcher. Let me say that again. A coach must

be ready to catch with the pitcher with a face mask. When your starting catcher is left on the bases at the end of an inning a coach must go to the plate to warm up your pitcher. This will get your pitcher 5 or 6 extra pitches, ones she needs. *Tip: you can call time and ask the ump to put in a runner to replace your catcher to give them more time to get their gear on. Replace with the player who was last put "out".*

- A reserve player goes to the dugout-side outfield foul line and plays catch with that outfielder. This gives all outfielders more throws because the center fielder and off outfielder can warm up, just the two of them. It is important for them to work on throwing accuracy. They are not doing this so they can just toss the ball around. It should be done with a purpose.
- The other reserve player after she jogs in from the coach's box picks up all bats and equipment and puts it in its proper place.
- The infielders assume their deepest positions to take ground balls from the first baseman. The second baseman is in front of the outfield edge of the grass behind the bag, the short stop is on the outfield edge of the grass in the hole and the third baseman is as deep as he can get on the outfield edge of the grass. The toughest play they will have to make may be the farthest so why not have them work on that play in between innings? What does it accomplish to toss balls twenty feet? The first baseman should throw routine ground balls briskly to them and they should use good fielding mechanics and make accurate sharp throws back to her. They should jog back to their positions and await the next throw. All three infielders should make at least one backhand play every inning. The ball doesn't have to be thrown perfectly to their backhand side; they can just wait on the ball and get into a backhand position. Every pre-inning infield should be taken seriously. It is very common to see infielders clowning around and throwing balls all over the place. Teach them how to do it correctly. Players left to their own devices will invariably do it wrong or with poor technique. They have to be taught and then receive reinforcement.
- The pitcher gets about 5-8 pitches during her warm-up. She should throw all her pitches. She should throw the last two pitches from full stretch.
- When ump says "let's play" or after sufficient pitches. Catcher shouts, "BALLS IN!" As balls are rolled in to dug out. Catcher then shouts, "COMING DOWN!" The catcher then throws the ball to the Short Stop or Second Baseman. Pitcher needs to crouch down. Then the SS or 2b throws back to pitcher. The position not receiving the ball should the receiver up behind them.

A coach should pay close attention to their players during the time before every defensive half inning. They should be alert for lack of hustle and poor fielding technique.

It's another one of those "Little Things that make a team better."

Use verbal reinforcement at the end of every offensive half inning. You can use your own but these are some things to say; "Bullpen catcher get out there", "Ava, pick up Jenny", "First baseman do you have a ball?" (Make sure they get one when they come into the dugout after getting the third out.), "Jessica finish your pitch" (Reminding the pitcher to warm up using all her proper form), "Good throws ladies", "Hustle, Adriana."

Getting your team ready to play and on a routine will help with confidence. You will see a difference.