



Return to Play - Example Practice Plan

This practice will consist of 18 players, 3 coaches, and a health and safety coordinator. All aspects will include the proper usage of social distancing (6 feet) and the required cleaning methods will be followed.

Prior to Practice

- Head Coach does a quick scan of the field to ensure there are no potential hazards
- Head Coach goes over the practice plan with other coaches and assigns roles
- Health and Safety Coordinator ensures all participants are reminded of the strategies in place for a safe session, Social Distancing, Sanitizing, Maximum Numbers, No sharing, etc.
- Players are to place their bags along the fence (not in the dugout), 6 feet apart

Pre-Practice Meeting (5min)

All participants standing 6 feet apart down the outfield foul line.

- Remind players of the safety restrictions
 - Social Distancing
 - No sharing of equipment or personal items
 - No spitting, chewing gum, or eating sunflower seeds
 - No handshakes or high fives
- Go over practice plan with the team

Warm Up (25min)

- All players run 2 poles (in pairs)
- Dynamic warmup
 - Half of the players down left field, half down right field
- Throwing program
 - Half of players in left field, half in right field
 - Players partner up and play catch. Starting from short distance and slowly working longer
 - Players incorporate game like movements related to their position
 - Infielders (cut-offs, tags, quick hands)
 - Outfielders (crow-hops, gb footwork, simulated balls off the wall)
 - Catchers (throwing from the crouch)

- Pitchers (pickoffs, secondary pitches, throwing from stretch)

Main Section

- **Baserunning (10min)**

Players split into 4 groups, positioned at each base. Players awaiting their turn must be behind a cone (6 feet from the base). All groups work on the same drills.

- Home to 1st (through the bag and breakdown, round the bag, etc)
- Leadoffs and/or secondaries
- Stealing

- **Water and Disinfecting Hands Break (5min)**

- **Defense - Station Work (25min)**

Players split into groups and go through 2 stations: Infield and Outfield.

- Infield
 - Spread throughout the infield, players go through partner work
 - Players are at each position and go through a ground ball series, mixing in catcher throws to bases
 - Players remain at their position and the group works on Fly Ball Communication
- Outfield
 - Players split into 2 groups for outfield drills:
 - Fly ball routes
 - Ground balls
 - Fly ball communication

- **Water and Disinfecting Hands Break (5min)**

- **Defense - Team Activity (15min)**

Players are split into groups: Offense and Defense. Coach hits fungo at home plate, creating live situations. Offensive players act as baserunners while defensive players try to record outs.

Groups switch halfway.

- **Water and Disinfecting Hands Break (5min)**

- **Batting Practice (30min)**

Players are split into 4 groups: Hitting, Infield, Shallow Outfield, Deep Outfield. Pitchers are taken aside for drills and bullpens. One coach throws BP, one coach hits ground balls to infielders, one coach works with pitchers. Outfielders play balls live off the bat.

- **Cool Down (10min)**

- Players jog 2 poles (in pairs)
- Players meet in the outfield for static stretching, sitting 6 feet apart

Return to Play - Practice Plan

- Coach provides a debrief:
 - Evaluation of practice - what went well, what needs to be improved
 - Remind players of proper nutrition and rest during off-time
 - Talk about upcoming schedule
- **Post Practice**

Health and Safety Coordinator ensures equipment is cleaned and all participants wash their hands.

***Note** – Players take water breaks throughout the practice and disinfect hands each time. Health and Safety Coordinator monitors all aspects of the practice to ensure participants are maintaining social distancing (except for brief exchanges) and disinfecting their hands in between drills.

Social Distancing Tips

- Participants need to be 6 feet apart during prolonged periods of time:
 - Team talks
 - Pre/Post Practice, ie. Putting on and taking off cleats
 - Water breaks
 - Drills that involve players standing around waiting
- Key training situations to avoid:
 - Catcher/Hitter - Use a screen instead of a catcher during live drills
 - 1st base/runner - No stealing/leadoffs during live drills
 - Tag plays - Only allow force outs during live drills
- Utilize the entire field
 - Half of players place bags along 1st base fence and half along 3rd base fence
 - Half of players warmup in left field, half in right field
 - Players split into small groups for station work
 - Players split into offense and defense for Team Drills
 - When multiple players at the same position, player waiting goes down on one knee, 6 feet away
 - Avoid use of dugouts during practices
- Keep players moving
 - Limit amount of drills that involve players waiting in a line
 - If players are waiting, ensure there is enough space for them to spread out safely
- Use all your coaches
 - Assign roles to your coaches to allow small group work
 - Have each coach plan their own stations
- Preparation
 - Plan your drills ahead of time
 - Be creative! Doing the same drills every practice can become boring for players

Examples of Batting Practice (BP)

Hitting is one of the most difficult skills to perform in sports, so it is important for players to work on this every practice. Depending on what is available at your facility and how long your practice is, here are some examples of effective batting practices:

- **On field BP** - The whole team goes through a full batting practice on the field. Split players into groups of 4. This is a good time to pull pitchers/catchers aside for bullpens. Possible groups:
 - Hitting
 - Hitting (Cage - if it is close by)
 - Infield
 - Outfield (Shallow or Deep)
 - Baserunning
 - Bunting
- **BP in the Cage** - If there is a batting cage at your facility, include hitting into your station work. Currently, there is a max of 2 people allowed in each cage, at once.
- **BP in the OF** - If there is no batting cage available, take players in small groups and hit whiffle and/or tennis balls in the outfield or beside the field.
- **Live BP** - Setup your batting practice like a game. Split players into 3 groups: Offense, Infield, and Outfield. Rather than having a pitcher (or coach) throw, offensive players hit off a tee. It can be live (1 swing and run) or a round of BP (6-8 swings and run on the last one). This will speed up the flow of the drill (no balls or swing and misses) and spread the players around the entire field. This also allows coaches to stop the drill at anytime for teachable moments.

Do's and Don'ts of BP

DO

- Take multiple rounds (3-4 rounds)
- Take short rounds (6-8 swings)
- Split players into small groups (3-4 players)
- Use protective screens
 - In front of the mound to protect the coach
 - Shallow center field to protect person with bucket
 - In front of 1st and/or 2nd base
 - This protects infielders if a coach is hitting ground balls in between pitches
 - Behind home plate
 - If a hitting tunnel is available, that will help keep foul balls inside the fence and protect the on-deck hitters. If not, a square screen will keep balls from going to the backstop.
- Use multiple ways to hit:
 - Tee Work
 - Front/Side Underhand Toss (coach)

Return to Play - Practice Plan

- Overhand Toss (coach)
 - Self Toss
- Have a focus for each round:
 - Round 1 - Opposite Field
 - Round 2 - Gap to Gap
 - Round 3 - Situational

DON'T

- Take long rounds (8+ swings)
- Have large hitting groups (5+ players)
- Cycle through all players at once, like a batting order
 - This wastes time, and forces players to go to their equipment bags more often
- Have pitchers throw to hitters
 - Balls and missed swings can drag the drill on. BP should be fast paced and fun for players
- Have a catcher behind the plate
 - Catcher/hitter interaction is a key situation to avoid and provides little value during batting practice. Use a screen instead.