

*As a coach, you have a major influence on your athletes. Not only will you affect the development of their skills and long-term enjoyment of the sport, you will also play a role in their development as individuals. It is important that you have effective resources to help you.*

*The Coaching Association of Canada, in partnership with the national sport organizations, compiled the following coaching tips.*

# Running the Practice



Practice time is precious, so you'll want to make the most of it. Here are some tips for running efficient and successful practices:

- Get to practice early and insist that your players arrive on time.
- Share responsibilities with another coach (and other helpers if necessary). This will give players more individual attention and help keep them active and involved.
- Keep drills and other activities brief ( i.e. 5-10 minutes each).
- Provide as many contacts with the ball as possible - throwing, receiving, fielding and hitting. In a game, players may only get four or five chances at bat or to field a ball. They must get many more contacts in practice to improve.
- Do the more demanding skills and drills early in the practice.
- Continually challenge players by increasing the difficulty of the drills once they have mastered easier ones.
- Treat all players equally and emphasize positive feedback. Try to talk to every player individually at every practice.

## **Include the following elements in every practice:**

### **Warm-up**

- Easy run or warm-up activity followed by slow stretching will prepare players for the more demanding activities that follow.

### **Throwing and Receiving**

- Spend some time each session on developing throwing form and accuracy as well as arm strength.

### **Defensive skills**

- Practise all defensive skills used in a game on a regular basis. These include moving to the ball, fielding ground balls, and catching pop-ups.

### **Batting Practice**

- To run this part of practice efficiently, have players rotate through a series of stations. These could include hitting off a batting tee, soft toss, and "live" batting practice (with the coach pitching from a distance of 8 to 9 metres from the batter).

### **Base running**

- Use races and relays to improve running technique. Players should practise running from home to first, and from base to base. Strategies like tagging up and advancing can also be practised. Some elements of base running can also be included in batting practice.

### **Cool-Down**

- Conclude the practice with stretching and easy running to bring the player's heart rate and body temperature back toward normal resting levels.

