



Mini Coaching Manual

Welcome, volunteer parent coaches! Your commitment to guiding and developing young softball players is invaluable. This mini-coaching manual aims to provide you with fundamental principles, strategies, and drills tailored to coaching and nurturing young athletes aged 5 to 15.

Establishing a Positive Environment:

- Creating a positive environment is crucial for the development and enjoyment of young softball players. To achieve this:
- Encourage players to support and uplift each other, fostering a sense of camaraderie within the team.
- Implement a zero-tolerance policy for bullying, discrimination, or any form of negative behaviour.
- Emphasize the importance of teamwork and how every player contributes to the team's success.
- Address conflicts or issues promptly and constructively, using them as opportunities for growth and learning.
- Organize team-building activities or outings outside of practices and games to strengthen bonds among players.

Understanding Developmental Stages:

- Understanding the developmental stages of young athletes is essential for tailoring coaching methods effectively:
- Recognize that younger players may have shorter attention spans and may require more frequent breaks or varied activities during practices.
- Be patient with players who are still developing coordination and motor skills, providing extra support and encouragement as needed.
- Adjust your coaching approach based on the age and skill level of the players, gradually introducing more complex techniques and strategies as they progress.
- Keep in mind that young athletes develop at different rates and avoid comparing players to their peers.

Basic Skills Focus:

When teaching basic softball skills to young players, it's important to break down each skill into manageable components:

- **Throwing:** Teach proper throwing mechanics, starting with a basic grip and progressing to proper arm motion and follow-through.
- **Catching:** Emphasize hand-eye coordination, body positioning, and using two hands to catch.
- **Fielding:** Teach players proper fielding stance, footwork, and techniques for ground balls and fly balls.

- **Hitting:** Introduce proper batting stance, grip, and swing mechanics. Focus on hand-eye coordination and timing.
- **Base Running:** Teach the basics of base running, including sprinting techniques, rounding bases, and sliding.

Practice Structure:

- A well-structured practice is essential for maximizing player development and engagement:
- Create a practice plan outlining the objectives for each session and the drills or activities you'll use to achieve them.
- Incorporate a variety of drills and exercises that target different aspects of the game, including individual skills, team strategies, and game situations.
- Keep practices dynamic and interactive, minimizing downtime and maximizing player involvement.
- Be flexible and willing to adapt the practice plan based on the needs and interests of the players.

Effective Communication:

- Clear and effective communication is key to building rapport with players and helping them improve:
- Use age-appropriate language and explanations that are easy for young players to understand.
- Demonstrate proper technique and provide visual cues to reinforce verbal instructions.
- Offer specific, constructive feedback that focuses on what players are doing well and areas for improvement.
- Encourage players to communicate with each other on the field, promoting teamwork and collaboration.

Parent Involvement:

- Parents play a vital role in supporting their children's participation in youth sports:
- Keep parents informed about the goals and expectations for the season, as well as any changes to the schedule or other relevant information.
- Encourage parents to attend games and practices to cheer on their children and provide positive reinforcement.
- Welcome parent volunteers to assist with tasks such as organizing team snacks, coordinating transportation, or helping with equipment.
- Foster open communication with parents, addressing any concerns or questions they may have in a timely and respectful manner.

Safety First:

- Ensuring the safety of players is a top priority for coaches:
- Conduct regular equipment checks to ensure that all gear, including helmets, bats, and protective padding, is in good condition and properly fitted.
- Teach players proper techniques for sliding, diving, and other potentially hazardous activities, emphasizing the importance of avoiding unnecessary risks.
- Establish clear protocols for handling injuries, including who to contact and how to provide initial first aid until medical help arrives.



- Communicate with parents about the importance of hydration, sun protection, and other safety considerations, especially during outdoor practices and games.

Promoting Fun and Sportsmanship:

- Softball should be an enjoyable and rewarding experience for young players:
- Plan practices and drills that are fun and engaging, incorporating games, challenges, and friendly competitions to keep players motivated and excited.
- Emphasize the importance of good sportsmanship, both on and off the field, by modelling respectful behaviour and reinforcing positive actions.
- Encourage players to celebrate each other's successes and support each other through challenges, fostering a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect.
- Remind players that while winning is nice, the true value of sports lies in the lessons learned, friendships made, and memories created along the way.

Teaching Phrases

Consistency and repetition are key in effectively teaching young softball players. Here's a summary of teaching phrases that you can use consistently throughout your coaching sessions:

- "Eyes on the ball!"
- "Ready position, hands up!"
- "Focus and follow through!"
- "Keep your feet moving!"
- "Use your glove!"
- "Step and throw!"
- "Stay low and go!"
- "Shorten your swing!"
- "Run through the base!"
- "Stay balanced!"
- "Use two hands!"
- "Back up your teammates!"
- "Good effort, keep it up!"
- "Nice try, let's try again!"
- "Teamwork makes the dream work!"
- "Bend your knees!"
- "Watch for the signal!"
- "Keep hustling!"
- "Stay positive, keep learning!"
- "Have fun out there!"

Consistently using these phrases will help reinforce important skills and concepts while maintaining a positive and encouraging atmosphere during practices and games.

Coaching Mindset

Here's a list of helpful concepts to incorporate into an effective coaching mindset:

- Encourage players to embrace challenges, learn from mistakes, and continually strive for improvement.

- Recognize and praise effort, progress, and achievements to boost players' confidence and motivation.
- Be flexible in your coaching approach, adjusting strategies and techniques to meet the needs of individual players and the team as a whole.
- Understand that learning takes time and be patient with players as they develop their skills and understanding of the game.
- Put yourself in the shoes of your players, understanding their perspectives, feelings, and experiences to better support and guide them.
- Foster open and clear communication with players, parents, and fellow coaches, promoting transparency, understanding, and collaboration.
- Work with players to set both short-term and long-term goals, helping them focus their efforts and track their progress over time.
- Hold players accountable for their actions and responsibilities, while also taking ownership of your role as a coach and leader.
- Teach players to bounce back from setbacks and adversity, emphasizing the importance of perseverance and mental toughness.
- Strive to maintain a balanced approach to coaching, focusing on both the development of individual skills and the cultivation of teamwork, sportsmanship, and enjoyment of the game.
- Stay informed about new coaching techniques, strategies, and developments in the sport, and be open to learning from players, fellow coaches, and other sources.
- Lead by example, demonstrating honesty, fairness, and ethical behaviour in all aspects of coaching and competition.

Incorporating these concepts into your coaching mindset will not only help you become a more effective coach but also contribute to the positive growth and development of your players both on and off the field.

Diamonds

1. Wellesley Upper & Lower - 1004 Catherine St., Wellesley
2. St. Clements #1, #2, #3 - 27 Peter St, St. Clements
3. Linwood Upper & Lower - 5279 Ament Line, Linwood

New for 2024

Equipment sheds

- You will be given the combination to the lock. Please do not share this and ensure that you lock the lock properly before you leave. Equipment includes rake, chalk and chalk liner, hammer, and measuring tape.
- You are responsible for lining the diamond, setting up your bases and the pitching mound. See chart below. It will also be posted in the sheds.

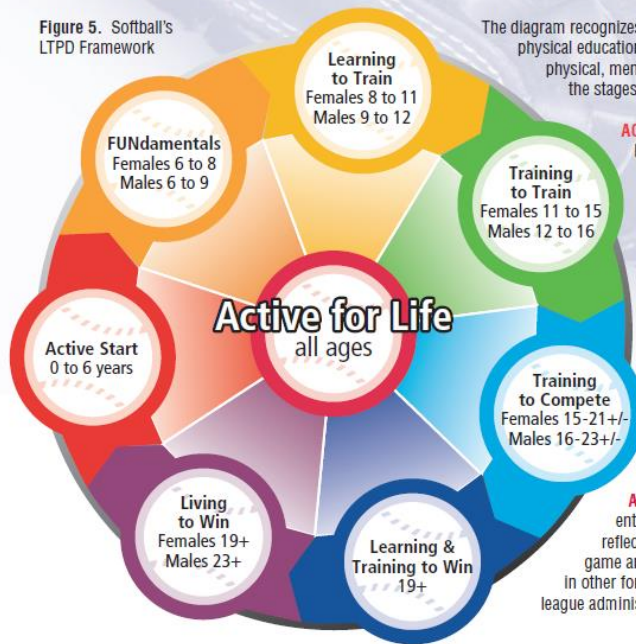


Softball Canada - Player Development

STAGES OF PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

In keeping with the generic Canadian LTAD model, Softball's LTPD model, outlined in Figure 5, consists of eight seamlessly linked stages — Active Start, FUNdamentals, Learning to Train, Training to Train, Training to Compete, Learning and Training to Win, Living to Win, and Active for Life. The model has a softball-specific focus that reflects the realities and demands of the game at the highest level while retaining at its core the notion of age- and ability-appropriate programming and evaluation. The titles of the various stages imply the general intent of the programming within each stage. Learning to Train, for example, refers to systematic programming aimed at establishing key skill elements of softball while Living to Win refers to a period of time where the focus is on performing skills at a very high level in order to win medals.

Figure 5. Softball's LTPD Framework



The diagram recognizes that during the early stages, other settings such as elementary school physical education programs and community sport programs may contribute to a child's physical, mental, emotional, and social development. As well, it should be noted that the stages overlap as players progress at different rates.

ACTIVE START is about getting children interested in physical activity, learning the fundamental movement skills of running, jumping, catching, twisting, kicking, and throwing, and linking them in play.

FUNdamentals emphasizes further development of fundamental movement skills and lays a general foundation of physical capacities.

LEARNING TO TRAIN, TRAINING TO TRAIN, and TRAINING TO COMPETE focus on developing softball-specific skills, ensuring an appropriate level of fun while adding the competitive aspects of the game.

LEARNING AND TRAINING TO WIN emphasizes a shift towards true high performance, including an increased focus on individualized training and performance results at competitions.

LIVING TO WIN emphasizes performance results and international excellence.

ACTIVE FOR LIFE is the final stage of the continuum and may be entered at any time after a player becomes involved in softball. This stage reflects an individual's desire, competency, and personal interest in the game and emphasizes lifelong participation and activity, not only in softball but in other forms of physical activity. Participation can be as a player, coach, official, league administrator, or board member.

Softball Canada – Learning to Play Development Stages

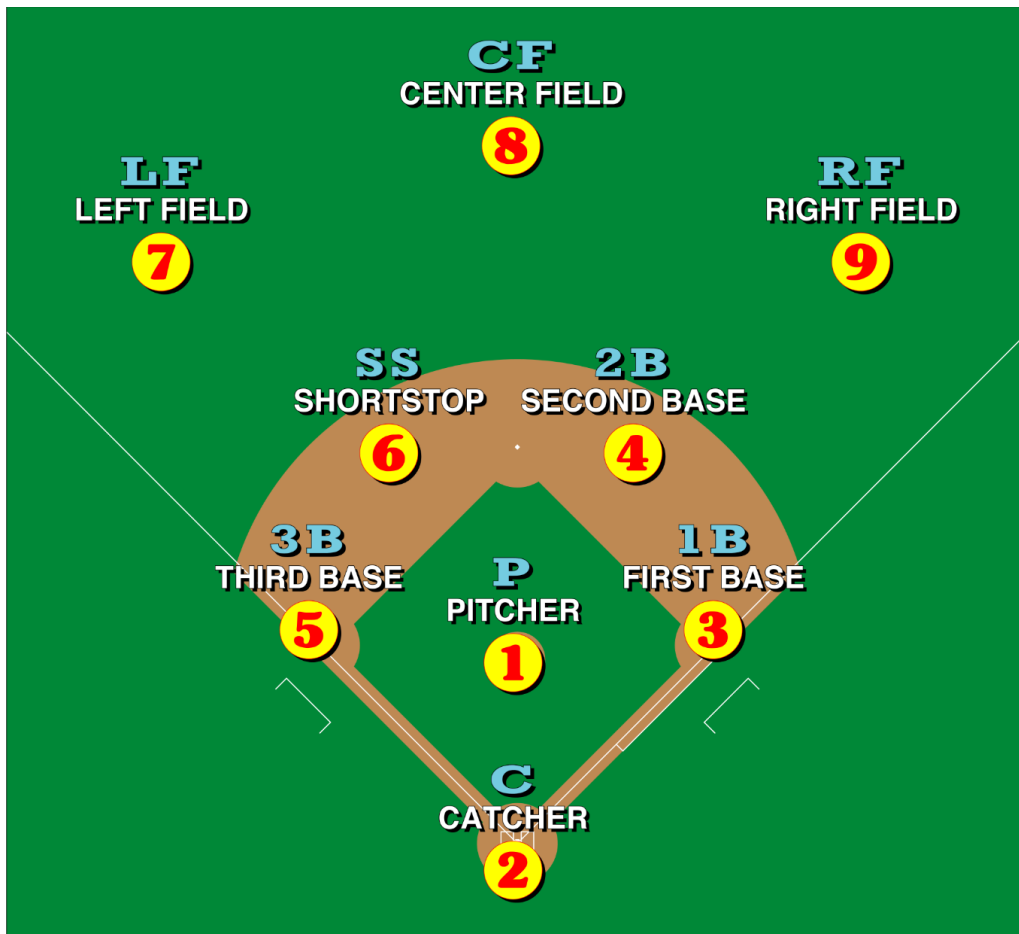
TABLE 3. Summary of Softball's LTPD Stages

STAGE FEATURE	ENTER			
	ACTIVE START AS	FUNDAMENTALS FUN	LEARNING TO TRAIN L2T	TRAINING TO TRAIN T2T
Overall Goal	Fun and active	Fun and participation	Develop overall sports skills and introduce softball skills	Develop physical capacities and softball skills Programming is growth spurt dependent
Chronological Age	Males: 0-6 Females: 0-6	Males: 6-9 Females: 6-8	Males: 9-12 Females: 8-11	Males: 12-16 Females: 11-15
Softball Age Category	Learn To Play Level 1, Mite	Learn To Play Level 1, 2, and 3, Mite	Learn To Play Level 2 and 3, Mite, Squirt	Squirt, Pee Wee, Bantam
Focus	Enjoy	Play	Learn	Compete
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General, overall development by participating in a variety of sports and activities • Learn fundamental movement skills • Encourage love of being physically active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General, overall development by participating in a variety of sports and activities • Learn fundamental movement skills & ABCs of athleticism • Use own body weight exercises to develop strength and fun games to develop physical capacities • Introduce simple rules and ethics of sport • Introduce simple tactics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major skill learning phase: fundamental sport skills should be learned before entering next stage • Introduce general mental skills • Use medicine ball, Swiss ball, and own body weight exercises to develop strength • Participate in complementary sports • Monitor PHV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major fitness development phase for stamina and strength with PHV as the reference point • Further develop mental skills • Introduce formal weight training • Introduce ancillary capacities • Participate in complementary sports • Monitor PHV
Windows of Trainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental movement skills • Speed • Suppleness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental movement skills • Speed • Suppleness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suppleness • Speed • Sport-specific skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suppleness • Speed • Strength* • Stamina*
Periodization	No periodization, but well-structured programs	No periodization, but well-structured programs	Single periodization	Single or double periodization
Practice to Competition Ratio <small>The proposed ratios represent an average throughout the year.</small>	No ratio recommended (wide range of activities)	No ratio recommended (wide range of activities)	70:30	Community Early: 70:30 Late: 60:40 Competitive 60:40



Position Numbering

Position numbering is a common system used in team sports like softball to designate specific positions on the field. Here's a standard numbering system typically used in softball:



Positional Responsibilities

Here's a summary of positional responsibilities for each position:

Pitcher (P):

- Deliver pitches to the catcher with accuracy and speed.
- Strategize pitch selection based on the game situation and batter.
- Field balls hit back to the pitcher's position.
- Communicate effectively with teammates to coordinate defensive plays.

Catcher (C):

- Receive pitches from the pitcher and catch them cleanly.
- Block pitches in the dirt to prevent runners from advancing.
- Quickly retrieve passed balls and return them to the pitcher or appropriate fielder.
- Call defensive coverages and communicate with the pitcher and infielders.



First Baseman (1B):

- Cover first base on ground balls hit to the right side of the infield.
- Field throws from infielders and make accurate throws to other bases.
- Communicate with the pitcher and other infielders on defensive positioning.
- Assist with fielding bunts and holding runners on base.

Second Baseman (2B):

- Cover second base on double plays and force outs.
- Field ground balls hit to the right side of the infield.
- Back up the first baseman on ground balls to the right side.
- Communicate with the shortstop and other infielders to coordinate defensive plays.

Third Baseman (3B):

- Cover third base on ground balls hit to the left side of the infield.
- Field bunts and make quick, accurate throws to first or other bases.
- Back up the shortstop on ground balls to the left side.
- Communicate with the shortstop and other infielders to coordinate defensive plays.

Shortstop (SS):

- Serve as the primary infielder for ground balls hit up the middle.
- Cover second base on double plays and force outs.
- Back up the third baseman on ground balls to the left side.
- Communicate with other infielders to coordinate defensive positioning and plays.

Left Fielder (LF):

- Cover the left side of the outfield and track fly balls hit to that area.
- Back up throws from the infield to prevent runners from advancing.
- Make accurate throws to other bases to prevent runners from advancing.

Center Fielder (CF):

- Cover the center of the outfield and track fly balls hit to that area.
- Communicate with corner outfielders to avoid collisions and cover gaps.
- Use speed and agility to chase down balls hit into the outfield gaps.

Right Fielder (RF):

- Cover the right side of the outfield and track fly balls hit to that area.
- Back up throws from the infield to prevent runners from advancing.
- Use a strong throwing arm to make accurate throws to other bases.

Practice Preparation

Practice preparation is essential for maximizing the effectiveness of your coaching sessions and ensuring that players have meaningful learning experiences. By following these steps, you can effectively prepare for softball practices and create valuable learning opportunities for your players. Remember to stay organized, flexible, and focused on the development and enjoyment of your team throughout the season.

Set Clear Objectives:

- Determine the specific skills, techniques, or strategies you want to focus on during the practice session.



- Tailor your objectives based on the developmental needs and skill levels of your players.

Develop a Practice Plan:

- Create a detailed outline of the practice schedule, including warm-up activities, skill drills, scrimmage or game situations, and cool-down exercises.
- Allocate appropriate time for each component of the practice plan to ensure a balanced and productive session.

Organize Equipment and Facilities:

- Gather all necessary equipment, such as softballs, bats, helmets, gloves, cones, and bases, and ensure they are in good condition.
- Arrange access to practice facilities, including fields, batting cages, or indoor facilities, and confirm any reservations or permits required.

Prepare Drills and Activities:

- Choose drills and activities that align with your practice objectives and cater to the skill levels and interests of your players.
- Have a variety of drills on hand to keep practices engaging and address different aspects of the game, including hitting, fielding, base running, and pitching.

Consider Player Safety:

- Review safety guidelines and protocols with players, emphasizing proper techniques for avoiding injuries during drills and scrimmages.
- Ensure that first aid supplies, water, and shade are readily available to address any potential injuries or dehydration during practice.

Communicate with Assistant Coaches:

- Coordinate with any assistant coaches or volunteers to ensure everyone is aware of their roles and responsibilities during the practice session.
- Assign specific tasks, such as leading warm-up drills, organizing equipment, or providing individualized instruction, as needed.

Review Previous Performance:

- Reflect on the team's performance in previous games or practices, identifying areas of strength and areas for improvement.
- Use insights from past performances to inform your practice plan and focus on addressing specific weaknesses or building on existing strengths.

Foster a Positive Environment:

- Set the tone for the practice session by greeting players warmly and expressing enthusiasm for their participation.
- Emphasize the importance of teamwork, sportsmanship, and effort, creating a supportive and encouraging atmosphere for players to thrive.

Stay Flexible:

- Be prepared to adapt your practice plan based on factors such as weather conditions, player fatigue, or unexpected interruptions.
- Remain flexible and responsive to the needs and interests of your players, making adjustments as necessary to keep practices engaging and productive.



PRACTICE PLAN

DATE:

Location:		# of Athletes:		Length of Practice	
Absent Athletes:					
Support Staff:					
Goals of Practice:	1 _____	2 _____	3 _____		

INTRO

Use the space below to outline what you will tell your athletes at the start of practice:

WARM-UP

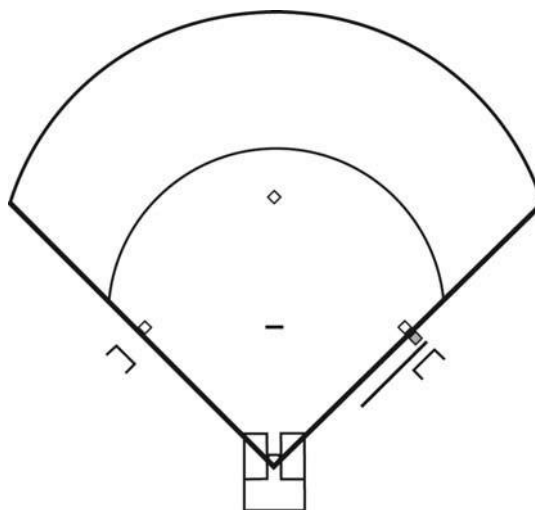
DRILL:

Time:
Equipment:
Objective(s) of Drill:

Drill Description:

Key Teaching Points:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____



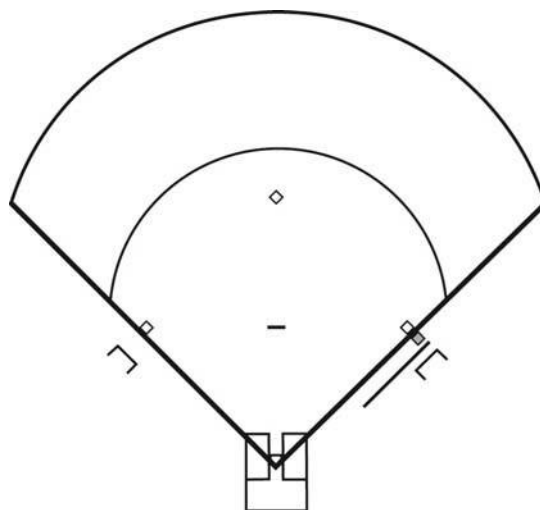
DRILL:

Time:
Equipment:
Objective(s) of Drill:

Drill Description:

Key Teaching Points:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____



DRILL:

Time:

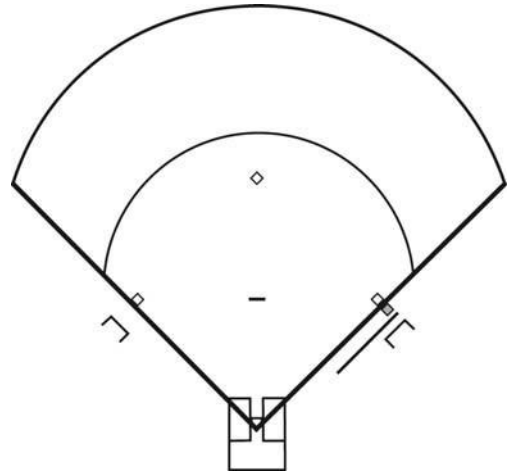
Equipment:

Objective(s) of Drill:

Drill Description:

Key Teaching Points:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____



DRILL:

Time:

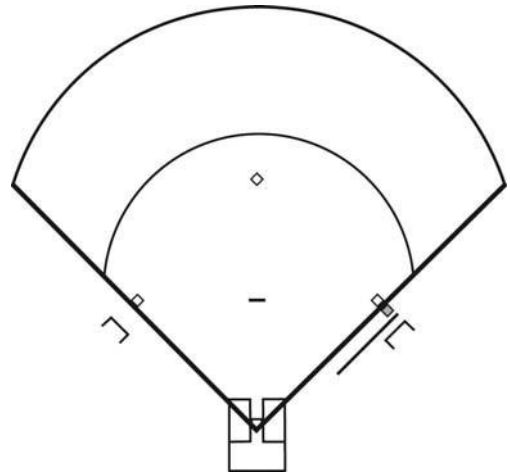
Equipment:

Objective(s) of Drill:

Drill Description:

Key Teaching Points:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____



MAIN PART

DRILL:

Time:

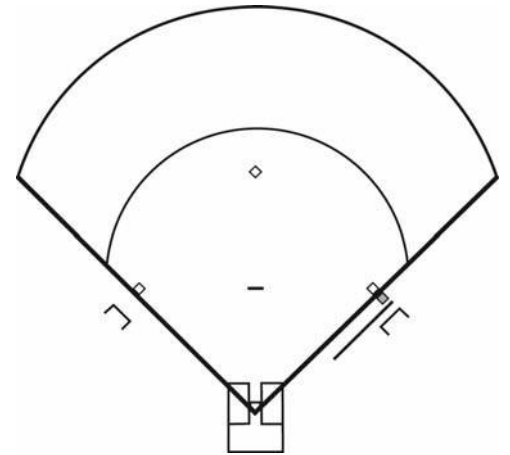
Equipment:

Objective(s) of Drill:

Drill Description:

Key Teaching Points:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____



DRILL:

Time:

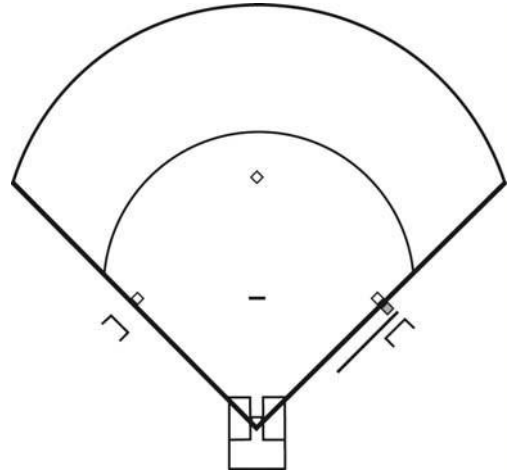
Equipment:

Objective(s) of Drill:

Drill Description:

Key Teaching Points:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____



DRILL:

Time:

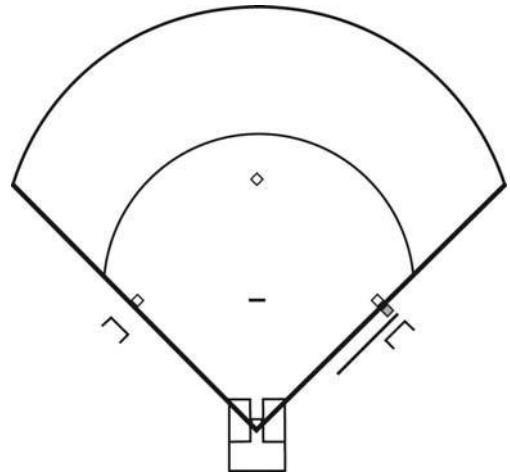
Equipment:

Objective(s) of Drill:

Drill Description:

Key Teaching Points:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____



DRILL:

Time:

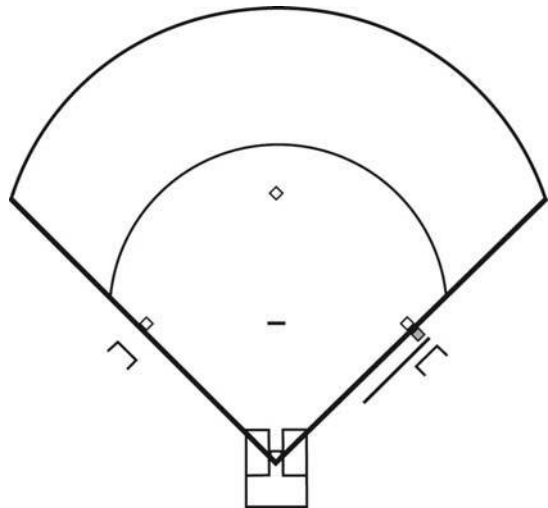
Equipment:

Objective(s) of Drill:

Drill Description:

Key Teaching Points:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____



DRILL:

Time:

Equipment:

Objective(s) of Drill:

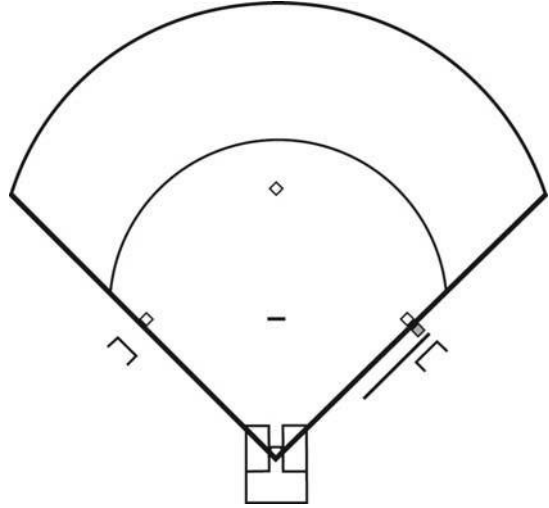
Drill Description:

Key Teaching Points:

- 1

- 2

- 3



DRILL:

Time:

Equipment:

Objective(s) of Drill:

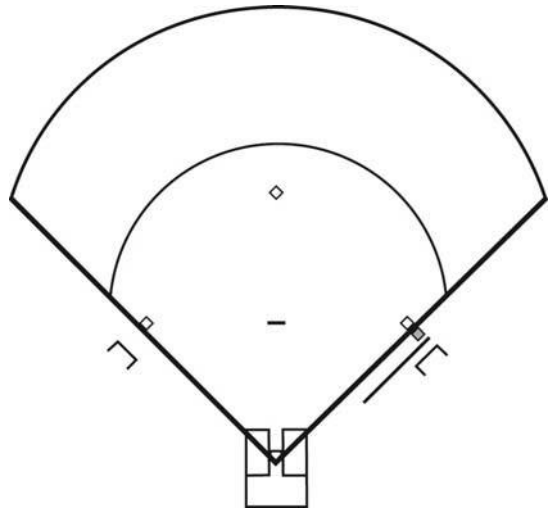
Drill Description:

Key Teaching Points:

- 1

- 2

- 3



COOL DOWN & CONCLUSION

10 minutes

Static Stretching Routine

Debrief:

PRACTICE EVALUATION

What worked well:

What to change for next time: