

YOUTH BASEBALL ADVICE — HOW TO RUN A GREAT PRACTICE

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IN BASEBALL CAMPS UNCATEGORIZED YOUTH BASEBALL ADVICE



HOW TO RUN A GREAT PRACTICE

On our trek across the country with American Baseball Camps we have learned that many kids aren't getting any better at their practices. Smart baseball parents are seeking out teams that run legitimate practices where their kid can actually get better, and I don't blame them.

One of the worst practice stories we heard was in Tahlequah Oklahoma. A dad told me that at his kid's practices the coach would put everyone in a group in the outfield and hit fly-balls and whoever catches it, catches it. This is similar to a game we used to play as kids called "500" but it certainly isn't an entire practice!

This how-to guide on running a great practice is based on 20 years of good baseball experience, extensive research, and being a veteran player at one of the top D1 Baseball Programs in the country.

The Warmup

About ten years ago sports scientists realized that there is a more efficient way to warm-up than to just static stretch and count to ten. It is recommended to

run kids through a “dynamic warmup” before practice and that “static stretch,” that you may be familiar with, after practice.

Here’s a quick example of a good dynamic warmup, it works best in two lines starting on the outfield foul line:

- jog 45 feet, jog back
- shuffle 45 feet, shuffle back
- karaoke 45 feet, karaoke back
- high knees 45 feet, high knees back
- butt kicks 45 feet, butt kicks back
- walking quad stretch 45 feet, walking quad stretch back
- leg swings 45 feet, leg swings back
- skipping leg swings 45 feet, skipping leg swings back
- lunges, side lunges 45 feet, jog back
- sprint 45 feet, sprint back

Upper Body Stretch:

- small arm circles forward, big arm circles forward
- small arm circles backwards, big arm circles backwards
- shoulder stretch across
- tricep stretch
- arm swings high to behind you (bicep stretch)
- rotator cuff stretch on the ground (lay on your throwing arm side put arm at 90 degree angle and push hand down towards the ground).

Play Catch

When they play catch remind them to take it seriously. You cannot win in baseball if you can’t play catch. Teach them the catch game to keep them locked in. If you hit them in the chest 3 points, hit them in the face 2 points, hit them in the arms or legs 1 point. Front elbow should be up and pointing towards where you want to throw it when you are playing catch.

Water break

On Field BP with the Rest of The Teams Taking Live Reps

BP on the field is a great way to see the results of your batting practice. It also gives the fielders a chance to take live reps off the bat if you do it right. Split your team into 4 groups of 3 (lets say you have 12 for the example). When 1 group hits, the other 9 players are in the field taking live reps off their teammates hitting,

or fungos from a coach. Coaches stand adjacent to home plate. The coach on the 3rd base side hits fungos to the first baseman and the shortstop. The coach on the 1st base side hits fungos to the 3rd baseman and 2nd baseman. You need to wait and hit them in between pitches so that kids don't have to field the fungo and the live grounder at the same time. Mix in some fly balls for the outfielders if they aren't getting much action live off the bat.

Water break

Drill Circuit

Don't have the whole team running one drill at one time, try to have coaches running simultaneous drills and just have the players rotate. It's important to be **efficient** with your practice time. Below we have listed some drills to choose from that we like that we think could make young players a lot better:

- Rundown drill with a baserunner
- Pitcher fielding practice
- Double plays
- Short hops drill for infielders
- Quarterback drill (over the shoulder catches)
- 4 corners drill
- Around the bucket drill (for infielders to take the right path to the ball)
- Blocking drill
- Bare handed ground balls
- Bare handed receiving practice (catchers)
- Pickoffs
- Up the middle drill
- Soft toss
- Bunt defense
- Throwing to second (catcher and middle infielders)
- ESPN top ten drill
- Double cuts drill
- Robbing home runs drill

A good practice is all about getting the player a lot of good reps in a short amount of time. Players will get burnt out if they are out there all day so try to keep a practice around an hour and a half to two hours.

Make everything a game – I was doing a hitting lesson with a kid and was telling him to try to hit the back net of the cage and drive the ball up the middle. He kept pulling everything, he didn't hit the back net once. Then when I created a game where hitting the L-Screen was 1 point and the back net was 2 points – he

took off. Next thing I knew he was saying “I’m gonna get to 20”. Kids respond well to games and challenges, so try to use those to your advantage. If anything they just promote focus and induce competition.

Treat them like studs and they’ll start acting like it – My career took off when I found a coach that treated me like I was better than I really was. You’d be surprised, treat a player like he’s better than he’s playing and he’ll rise to the occasion

Encourage & support – This generation can’t be coached the same way that you were coached growing up. The drill sergeant makes them run till they puke stuff just isn’t needed. These kids are smart and if you treat them with respect, they’ll treat you with it in return. Every player isn’t created equal — you have to coach to your team. Know your players and coach them accordingly.

– Blog was written by a group of older D1 Baseball Players that have chosen to remain anonymous for NCAA reasons.