

OPYBS Coaches' Manual Addendum

T-Ball Practice Plans

The following practice plans were designed and utilized during the 2011 OPYB/S t-ball season. Additional detail for each of the drills outlined in these practice plans is included in the appropriate section of the OPYB/S Coaches' Manual.

Please keep in mind that these practice plans are meant to be a guide. Each team is different, and coaches will have to adjust these plans to address the specific areas where additional skill-development is necessary. In addition, it can be very effective to utilize core drills as part of a pre-game warm-up routine.

It is important to remember that t-ball players are five to eight years old. T-ball is designed to prepare young players for softball, and it is important to introduce as many aspects of the game as possible at an early age. Do not assume that they have any knowledge of the game. Many young players will not even be aware of most of the fielding positions (Right Field from Left Field, 2B from SC, etc.), let alone what their respective responsibilities are.

It is advisable not only to break skills and drills down into simpler, smaller components, but also to utilize a variety of different methods to teach them. There are, of course, core drills (such as "ready, break, throw") that should be repeated as often as possible. However, fundamentals can also be emphasized while practicing other, game-like situations, and this will help the players to understand why fundamentals are important.

Repetition is key, though it is equally important to maintain the interest of the children. With this in mind, get as much help as possible, don't linger too long on one particular drill, and whenever possible, divide the team into smaller groups to keep everyone busy. Encourage players to practice core drills at home. Most of all, make practices fun.

PRACTICE 1 (80 minutes)

I. Warm Up / Introduction (10 min):

- A. Everyone introduces self
- B. Structure of practice: warm-up, team drills, hitting/fielding stations, team practice/game simulations
- C. Talk about and practice a lot of skills. Fielding, Throwing, Catching, Hitting, Strategy.
Repeat at future practices. Please work at home.
- D. Questions, please ask. Problems, please talk to me. Unless you get hurt, no crying!
- E. Warm-Up and Stretching Drills [PAGES _____]

II. Throwing (10 min)

A. Explanation (5 min) - [PAGES _____]

1. C Grip
2. Move Body & Feet / Point Shoulder toward Target
3. Wrist/Ball Position
4. Rotate Upper Body
5. Throwing Arm - Keep Elbow above Shoulder!!
6. Snap Wrist/Scratch Eyes
7. Follow Through

B. Practice (5 min) - Ready, Break, Throw [PAGES _____]

III. Catching (10 min)

A. Explanation (5 min) [PAGES _____]

1. Everyone must learn how to catch.
2. Explain backhand vs. fingers up.
3. Always Use Two Hands.
4. Avoid Basket catches.
5. Show how to get lower balls (squat).

B. Practice - Coach Throw (5 min) [PAGES _____]

1. Blocking, shoulder high [PAGES _____]
2. Blocking, belly high [PAGES _____]
3. Catching using Backhand, SOFT TOSSES!

IV: Fielding/Throwing (10 min)

A. Explanation (5 min) [PAGES _____]

1. Ready Position
2. Charge - Get Lower to Ground as you move toward ball.
3. Breakdown - Triangle, Feet are back two points, glove is front point, Bend Knees!
4. Alligator
5. Set to Throw
6. Throw

B. Practice (5 min) [PAGES _____]

1. Ready Position, Field, Assume Throwing Position - NO BALL
2. Basic Grounders, Have Kids pair up and roll back & forth, emphasize fielding
3. Basic Grounders, One side rolls, other side fields and throws back, then switch

Variation: Pair kids with coaches – have the coach roll balls and the players field them and throw them back.

V. Hitting (10 min)

A. Explanation (5 min)

1. Explain Stance [PAGES _____]

- a. Feet
- b. Knees
- c. Hips/Weight
- d. Hands on Bat
- e. Hands / Bat Position
- f. Head Position

2. Explain Swing [PAGES _____]

- a. Feet/Legs - Pivot, Rotation
- b. Arms - Knob First, Then Throw Hands at Ball/Extend, Then Follow-thru

3. Explain After Hit [PAGES _____]

- a. Drop Bat.
- b. Do Not Throw Bat. Warning. Out.
- c. ALWAYS RUN. Do Not Assume Foul Ball.

B. Dry Swing Reps (5 min) - Slow (Stance, Knob, Extend, Follow-through)

VI. Simulated Game (25 min)

- A. Half of Team Bats, Half of Team Fields
- B. Switch After Everyone Has a Turn to Bat
- C. Stress TEAM Set, You Bet, Ready Position
- D. Work with Batters on Proper Form
- E. Work with Fielders on Moving Toward Ball, Reinforce Proper Throwing, Catching
- F. Let BaseRunners RUN!

VII. Wrap-Up (5 min)

PRACTICE 2 (75 Minutes)

I. Warm Ups & Stretching / Introduction (5 min) [PAGES _____]

II. Review Catch and Throw (20 min)

- A. Explanation - Throw [PAGES _____]
- B. Ready, Break, Throw Drill [PAGES _____]
- C. Explanation - Grounders [PAGES _____]
- D. Practice - Coach Roll, Players Field and Throw Back
- E. Explanation - Catch [PAGES _____]
- F. Practice - Coach Throw [PAGES _____]
 - 1. Blocking, shoulder high
 - 2. Blocking, belly high
 - 3. Catching using Backhand

III: Stations (30 min) - Team should be split in half, spend 15 minutes at each station

A. Set I (15 min)

1. Group A: Batting

- a. Explanation of Stance [PAGES _____]
- b. Explanation of Swing [PAGES _____]
 - Reiterate importance of hard swing and complete swing (follow-through)
- c. Explanation After Hit [PAGES _____]
- d. Tee Work - Full Swings - Emphasize and Focus on a specific issue or two for each player – Those not hitting should shag balls
One player could be on-deck taking practice swings.

2. Group B: Fielding

- a. Pitcher -> 1B
 - i. Explain First Base Position
 - extend glove to ball, provide a target
 - start 3 steps away
 - if ball is not hit to you, get to 1B
 - if ball not thrown accurately, get off base to get it
 - ii. Explain Pitcher Position
 - “Ready, Set” - LOUD
 - After Response from Team, make sure everyone is paying attention. If not, call on them.
 - Control of Ball in Circle by Defensive Player
 - STOP RUNNERS, WATCH FOR 3B -> HOME
 - iii. Soft Hit Grounders - Field and Throw to 1B
 - iv. 1B always a force-out

- b. General Fielding
 - set infield, hold back 1 or 2 runners
 - coach hits balls
 - girls field and try to make plays
 - discuss and explain each situation based on runners
 - where can outs be made

B. Set II (15 min)

1. Group A: Fielding:

Same as with Set I

2. Group B: Batting:

Same as with set I.

IV. Base-Running 101 (15 min) [PAGES _____]

1. Explain Base-Running

- a. Order of Bases
- b. Swing, Drop Bat
- c. Do Not Watch Ball, Listen for/Watch 1B Coach
- d. Run Through Base - Turn to Right

2. Incremental Base-Running Drills [PAGES _____]

- Start with Hitting, Dropping Bat, Running to 1B
- Add Going to 2B / Focus on Listening to Coach

V: Wrap-Up (5 min)

PRACTICE 3 (75 Minutes)

I. Warm Ups & Stretching / Introduction (5 min) [PAGES _____]

II. Everyday Balls (5 min) [PAGES _____]

- A. Straight
- B. Glove Side
- C. Backhand

III. Catching (10 min)

A. Explanation / Review (2 min)

- 1. Explain backhand vs. fingers up.
- 2. Always Use Two Hands.
- 3. Avoid Basket catches.
- 4. Show how to get lower balls (squat).

B. Practice - Coach Throw - Blocking/Catching Drill [PAGES _____] (8 min)

IV. Throwing (10 min)

A. Explanation (2 min) - Grip to Follow-Through

B. Practice (8 min)

- Flips
- One-Knee Throwing Drill
- Ready Break Throw

V: Fielding Positions / Bases (10 min)

- A. Infield - Stop Ball from Going into Outfield, Get Balls from OF Positions, Stop Runners from Advancing, MAKE OUTS
- B. Outfield - STOP HOME RUNS, Get ball back to infield, catch fly balls
- C. All Bases - Make Outs, Tag runners vs. force outs
- D. 1B - Always can tag the base. If batter goes to 2B, 1B player can help cover Home/Get ball to P.
- E. Reiterate Positions that often get confused: 2B vs. Short Center, LF & RF, SS

VI: Batting (20 min)

A. Explanation - Stance to Follow-Through (5 min)

B. Batting/Fielding Practice (15 min)

- 1. Put 9 Kids in Field, Each Bats 5 swings max. Run on Good Hit.
- 2. Rotate Positions after score/Out.
- 3. Runner who comes home goes to RF.
- 4. Rotate RF->CF->LF->3B->SS->SC->2B->1B->P->Bat

VII. Base-Running (10 min)

- 1. Review Base-Running
- 2. Incremental Base-Running Drill [PAGES _____]

VIII: Wrap-Up (5 min)

PRACTICE 4 (90 Minutes)

Note: This practice was held on a very warm Sunday in early April, hence the water breaks.

I. Warm Ups & Stretching / Introduction (5 min) [PAGES _____]

II. Stations (25 min)

A. Set I (10 min)

1. Group A: Simple Cut-Off Drill [PAGES _____]

2. Group B: Catching/Blocking [PAGES _____]

B. Water Break / Station Shift (5 min)

C. Set II (10 min)

1. Group A: Catching/Blocking [PAGES _____]

2. Group B: Simple Cut-Off Drill [PAGES _____]

III. Water Break (5 min)

IV. Simulated Game (30 min) [PAGES _____]

V. Water Break (5 min)

VI. Base Running (15 min)

1. Incremental Base-running Drill [PAGES _____]

2. Incremental Base-running Drill, Variation 2 [PAGES _____]

VII. Wrap-Up (5 min)

PRACTICE 5 (85 minutes)

(With four teams vying for one field, this practice was adjusted on the fly.)

I. Warm Up / Introduction (10 min):

- Catch and Throw Session
- Short Distance Between Coach and Players
- Practice Catching with Glove in Backhand Position [PAGES _____]

II. Grounders (15 min)

- A. Field and Throw Review
- B. Practice by Pretending to Field, Moving to Throwing Position
- C. Ready, Break, Throw [PAGES _____]
- D. Roll Grounders and Throw Back to Coach [PAGES _____]

III. Scrimmage Game (40 min)

- A. 2-inning Game
- B. Every Girl Bats in Each Inning
- C. Coaches Allowed on Field w/ Fielders to Teach, Don't Interfere with Play
- D. Otherwise, Follow Rule Book

IV. Base Running (15 min)

1. Review Base-Running
2. Incremental Base-Running Drill [PAGES _____]

V. Wrap-Up (5 min)

PRACTICE 6 (75 minutes)

I. Warm Up / Introduction (5 min): [PAGES _____]

II. Hitting

- This will take place concurrently over the course of practice.
- Girls will work with hitting coach in groups of three.
- Two girls field balls, while the third girl bats.
- Emphasize proper form in stance and swing
- Emphasize need to swing hard and follow-through
- Practice Dry Swing Reps as needed / Talk through Steps as Needed.

III. Footwork (5 min) [PAGES _____]

- Introduce Karaoke/Carioca/Grapevine Footwork Drill
- Practice

IV. Everyday Balls (10 min) [PAGES _____]

Up-the-Middle/Glove Side/Backhand - Review/Explain & Practice Each

V. Grounders (10 min) [PAGES _____]

Coach or Player Roll
Fielder should move toward ball, field, move into proper throwing position, and throw

VI. Base-Running (15 min) [PAGES _____]

- Incremental Base-Running Drill

VII. Simulated Game (25 min) [PAGES _____]

VIII. Wrap-Up (5 min)

PRACTICE 7 (75 minutes)

I. Warm Up / Introduction (5 min): [PAGES _____]

II. Hitting

- This will take place concurrently over the course of practice.
- Girls will work with hitting coach in groups of three.
- Two girls field balls, while the third girl bats.
- Emphasize proper form in stance and swing
- Emphasize need to swing hard and follow-through
- Practice Dry Swing Reps as needed / Talk through Steps as Needed.

III. Footwork (5 min) [PAGES _____]

- Introduce Karaoke/Carioca/Grapevine Footwork Drill
- Practice

IV. Catching / Throwing (20 min)

- Catching/Blocking Drill [PAGES _____]
- Fly Balls (Short, Soft Tosses, Extending Force and Distance) [PAGES _____]
- Review Throwing Technique
- Wrist Flips for Throwing [PAGES _____]
- One-Knee Throwing Drill [PAGES _____]
- Ready / Break / Throw [PAGES _____]

V. Force-Outs vs. Tag Outs (20 min)

- Review of Force-Outs vs. Tag Outs
- Set-Up Situations, using players.
- Quiz Players on How Outs Can Be Made

VI. Grounders (20 min)

- Review of Form [PAGES _____]
- Practice Grounders Up-the-Middle
- Work on charging the ball, especially slow grounders
- Stationary Ball - Bare Hand
- Glove-Side
- Include throw to 1B for all.

VII. Playing as a Team / Sportsmanship / Wrap-Up (5 min)

PRACTICE 8 (75 minutes)

I. Warm Up / Introduction (5 min) [PAGES _____]

II. Hitting [PAGES _____]

- This will take place concurrently over the course of practice.
- Girls will work with hitting coach in groups of three.
- Two girls field balls, while the third girl bats.
- Emphasize proper form in stance and swing
- Emphasize need to swing hard and follow-through
- Practice Dry Swing Reps as needed / Talk through Steps as Needed.

III. Catching / Throwing (15 min)

A. One-Knee Throwing Drill [PAGES _____]

B. Ready, Break, Throw [PAGES _____]

C. Catching/Fly Balls - Straight & Glove Side [PAGES _____]

IV. Grounders (15 min)

- A. Review Importance of Getting Glove Down, Getting Body Low
- B. Importance of Getting Ball Back to Pitcher Quickly
- C. Partial In-field Drill / Plays at 1B [PAGES _____]

V. Force-Out vs. Tag Out Situations / Pop Ups that Are Caught! (20 min)

- Review of Force-Outs vs. Tag Outs
- Set-Up Situations, using players.
- Quiz Players on How Outs Can Be Made

VI. BaseRunning (15 min)

Incremental Base Running Drill [PAGES _____]

VII. Wrap-Up (5 min)

PRACTICE 9 (75 minutes)

I. Warm Up / Introduction (5 min) [PAGES _____]

II. Hitting [PAGES _____]

- This will take place concurrently over the course of practice.
- Girls will work with hitting coach in groups of three.
- Two girls field balls, while the third girl bats.
- Emphasize proper form in stance and swing
- Emphasize need to swing hard and follow-through
- Practice Dry Swing Reps as needed / Talk through Steps as Needed.

III. Stations (25 min Total)

A. Station A:

1. Catching/Blocking Drill [PAGES _____]
2. One-Knee Throws [PAGES _____]
3. Ready, Break, Throw [PAGES _____]
4. Up-the-Middle Grounders [PAGES _____]

B. Station B: P -> 1B Drill. [PAGES _____]

Switch Stations after 12 ½ minutes.

V. Simulated Game (25min)

VI. BaseRunning (15 min)

Incremental Base-Running Drill with All Variations

VII. Wrap-Up (5 min)

PRACTICE 10 (75 minutes)

I. Warm Up / Introduction (5 min) [PAGES _____]

II. Hitting [PAGES _____]

- This will take place concurrently over the course of practice.
- Girls will work with hitting coach in groups of three.
- Two girls field balls, while the third girl bats.
- Emphasize proper form in stance and swing
- Emphasize need to swing hard and follow-through
- Practice Dry Swing Reps as needed / Talk through Steps as Needed.

II. Catching / Throwing (10 min)

- Wrist Flips [PAGES _____]
- One-Knee [PAGES _____]
- Ready, Break, Throw [PAGES _____]

III. Stations (15 min)

- A. OF -> IF / Simple Cut-Off Drill [PAGES _____]
- B. Star Drill - Short Distance [PAGES _____]

Players Should Switch Stations After 7 minutes.

IV. Cover Home Drill (10 min) [PAGES _____]

V. Simulated Game (20min) [PAGES _____]

- Rotate Girls through Fielding Positions. Every Girl Gets 3 Swings at Plate. Runs on Third Swing.

VI. BaseRunning (10 min) [PAGES _____]

- Incremental Base-Running Drill, All Variations

VII. Wrap-Up (5 min)

PRACTICE 11 (80 minutes)

I. Warm Up / Introduction (5 min) [PAGES _____]

II. Hitting [PAGES _____]

- This will take place concurrently over the course of practice.
- Girls will work with hitting coach in groups of three.
- Two girls field balls, while the third girl bats.
- Emphasize proper form in stance and swing
- Emphasize need to swing hard and follow-through
- Practice Dry Swing Reps as needed / Talk through Steps as Needed.

II. Stations - Set A (20 min)

A. Group 1

- Flips [PAGES _____]
- One Knee Throwing Drill [PAGES _____]
- Ready, Break Throw [PAGES _____]

B. Group 2

- Star Drill - Short Distance [PAGES _____]

Players Should Switch Stations After 10 minutes.

III. Stations - Set B (20 min)

A. Grounders

- Up-the-Middle [PAGES _____]
- Glove Side [PAGES _____]

B. Cover Home Drill [PAGES _____]

Players Should Switch Stations After 10 minutes.

V. Simulated Game (20min) [PAGES _____]

- Rotate Girls through Field Positions. Every Girl Gets 3 Swings at Plate. Runs on Third Swing.

VI. BaseRunning (10 min)

Incremental Base-Running - Practice Fly Balls that Are Caught [PAGES _____]

VII. Wrap-Up (5 min)

PRACTICE 12 (75 minutes)

I. Warm Up / Introduction (5 min) [PAGES _____]

II. Hitting

- This will take place concurrently over the course of practice.
- Girls will work with hitting coach in groups of three.
- Two girls field balls, while the third girl bats.
- Emphasize proper form in stance and swing
- Emphasize need to swing hard and follow-through
- Practice Dry Swing Reps as needed / Talk through Steps as Needed.

III. Catch, Field & Throw w/ Coach (5 min)

- Divide Team into Smaller Groups. Coaches Should Roll Grounders/Throw Pop Ups
- Players Should Field and make Quick Accurate Throw

IV: Making OUTS (30 min)

- A. Partial Infield Drill, Variation 1
- B. Partial Infield Drill, Variation 2
- C. Cover Home Drill [PAGES _____]

V. Simulated Game (20min)

- Divide Team in Half. Half Bats. Half in Field. One Time Thru Batting Order

VI. Tag-Out Drill (10 min)

IX. Wrap-Up (5 min)

PRACTICE 13 (75 minutes)

I. Warm Up / Introduction (5 min): [PAGES _____]

II. Hitting [PAGES _____]

- This will take place concurrently over the course of practice.
- Girls will work with hitting coach in groups of three.
- Two girls field balls, while the third girl bats.
- Emphasize proper form in stance and swing
- Emphasize need to swing hard and follow-through
- Practice Dry Swing Reps as needed / Talk through Steps as Needed.

III. Catch, Field & Throw w/ Coach (15 min)

- One-Knee Throwing Drill [PAGES _____]
- Ready, Break Throw [PAGES _____]
- Grounders - Up-the-Middle & Throw Back
- Pop-Ups / Soft Fly Balls [PAGES _____]

IV. Simple Cut-off Drill (Left Side) (20 min)

V. Partial Infield Drill, Variation 2 (20 min)

VI. Tag-Out Drill (10 min)

VII. Wrap-Up (5 min)

Sample Pre-Game Workout (30 min)

I. Warm Up / Introduction (5 min)

II. Stations

A. Hitting off Tee

B. Fielding

1. Flips
2. One-Knee Throwing Drill
3. Ready, Break, Throw
4. Field Ground Balls and Throw Back to Coach
5. Pop-Ups/Fly Balls

HITTING PRACTICE (30 minutes)

Note: This practice was held during week 8 of the season. The team was divided into four groups of three girls each. Each group was given a time slot for hitting practice.

A. Review of Hitting: From Stance to Follow-Through [PAGES _____]

B. Dry Swings [PAGES _____]

C. Explanation of Top-Hand/Bottom-Hand [PAGES _____]

D. Emphasize Importance of Taking a Full Swing

E. Full Swings off Tee [PAGES _____]

F. Correct/Instruct as Needed

G. Encourage Practicing at Home

New Drills:

Catching / Blocking

Level: T-Ball, 9U

This is a variation on the soft-hands/open glove drill. It can be utilized either in conjunction with the soft-hands/open glove drill or as its predecessor. It is particularly useful for developing confidence and getting young players over their fear of the ball by teaching them to use it to block the ball. While it is important for them to learn to catch in a fingers-up position, this drill will also teach them to catch in a backhand position.

Wearing her glove, a player should hold her hand in front of her. The glove should be closed, but the pocket side should face the ground. She should use her throwing hand to hold the fingers of the glove. The coach should gently toss balls (shoulder-high) to the player. The player should move her glove to block the ball. She should not swat at the ball.

The coach should throw some balls that are belly-high. The player should bend her knees to block them, not flip her glove around. Start with foam balls, tennis balls, or wiffle balls, and then progress to softballs. When a player becomes comfortable blocking the ball, have her open her glove and catch it, utilizing her backhand and fingers-up positions.

Incremental Base Running Drill

Level: T-Ball, 9U (Variation 2)

Preparation: You will need a 3B coach and a 1B coach, and they should be in their usual positions. Have the team line up in foul territory on the 3B side of home plate. Leave plenty of room for base runners.

The person at the front of the line should step into the batter's box. On the coach's command, she should pretend to swing a bat, take a few steps, drop her "bat," and run through 1B. The 1B coach should instruct her to "run through the base." After she has run through the base — using proper base running form! — she should return to the end of the line. Repeat until the entire team has done the drill.

The second time through the line, the 1B coach should instruct the runner to "run through the base" or "go 2." On her way to 2B, she should peek at the 3B coach for instruction. At this point, every player should be told to stop at 2B. Once the player has stopped at 2B, she should return to the end of the line. Repeat until the entire team has done the drill.

The third time through the line the 1B coach should instruct the runner to "run through the base" or "go 2." On her way to 2B, she should peek at the 3B coach for instruction. Using a hand signal, the 3B coach should instruct her to keep running or to stop at 2B. When both coaches have stopped the runners, or all runners have scored, the next batter should step up to the plate. Runners should stay on base until they have scored, at which point they should return to the end of the line.

Variations:

1) Have the girls swing a bat at the plate. However, if you are using bats, the team should line up behind the backstop or in the 3B dugout.

2) Place an additional coach on or behind the pitcher's mound. The coach should have a ball. When the batter bats, the coach tosses a ball into the air. At this point, the batter should run to 1B, paying attention to the coach not the ball. The runners should take a few steps toward the next base, but pay attention to the coaches and the ball. If the pitcher/coach catches the ball, the runners on base must not advance. (The coach can try to tag them if they run without paying attention). If the ball falls to the ground (or is dropped), the runners must advance to the next base. The 1B and 3B coaches should be yelling "back" if the ball is caught and "run" or "go" if the ball is dropped.

Pitcher -> 1B Drill

Level: T-Ball

This drill is most effective as part of a station. The first time through the drill, it is helpful to explain the responsibilities of each position to young players.

Half of the group should line up near the Pitcher position; the other half of the group should line up near the 1B position. The front person in each line should play the role of Pitcher or 1B.

The coach should roll or hit balls to the pitcher, who should catch the balls and make accurate throws to 1B. After the play, the girls should go to the end of their respective lines. After a few iterations, have the lines switch roles. Coaches can vary the strength of hits, making the Pitcher charge toward home to field a softly hit ball. Coaches can also throw pop-ups into the mix.

Variations: Hit balls to the Pitcher and have her make throws to 3B and/or 2B.

Simple Cut-Off Drill

Level: T-Ball, 9U

This drill is most effective as part of a station. The first time through the drill, it is helpful to explain the responsibilities of each position to young players.

Place one player at SC. Line up the rest of the team in CF. The coach should hit, roll, or throw balls into CF. The CF player should field the ball and toss it to the SC. The SC should pretend to apply a two-handed tag or step on the base. Coaches should rotate girls through the SC position, if they are able to catch. Everyone else should take turns at the CF position.

This drill also provides a good opportunity to reinforce the concepts of when a player can tag a base and when she should tag the runner.

Variations:

- 1) Practice throwing from RF to 2B player or from LF to SS.
- 2) Place a player at Pitcher and have the IF player throw the ball back to the Pitcher.
- 3) Add a Runner and Stop the Runner.

Simulated Game

Level: T-Ball

While coaches should use specific drills to isolate and target their training sessions, it is also important, particularly at the t-ball level, to give young players, prior to the start of the season, an idea of what to expect during a game. There are a variety of ways to simulate a game-like atmosphere, though it is important to expose players to a variety of positions in order to maintain their focus and interest in the field.

A scrimmage game is certainly a good way to provide this experience to players. However, coordinating schedules with other teams can sometimes be challenging. One effective method for achieving the same goal is to put players in each position in the infield, except Catcher. A coach can stand in the outfield to retrieve balls that escape the grasp of the infielders. The rest of the players on the team will bat and run the bases. Once a player scores, she can get her mitt and move into the field. The person playing pitcher can come in from the field and get ready to bat.

Players should rotate in the following order:

3B->SS->SC->2B->1B->Pitcher->Batters/Runners->3B

This will provide every player with an opportunity to play every position as well as bat and run the bases. Coaches can explain each game situation prior to the pitch.

Carioca/Grapevine/“Karaoke” Drill

Level: All

This is a good, basic footwork drill that can be used at all levels. Younger kids often refer to this as the “Karaoke” drill, and sometimes, it’s not worth debating the name! Once it is taught, the Carioca drill should be incorporated into a pre-game or pre-practice warm-up routine.

Players should stand in a line, and they should all perform the drill at the same time. It teaches lateral movement, and players should stand perpendicular to their destination.

Each player should begin the drill in an athletic position. For the purpose of this discussion, the players will begin by moving to their right side.

Each player should then:

- 1) push off with her outside/left foot
- 2) cross her left foot behind her right foot, planting it on the ground
- 3) move her right foot laterally until she is back in the original athletic position
- 4) cross her left foot in front of her right foot, planting it on the ground
- 5) move her right foot laterally until she is back in her original the original athletic position

Players should repeat these steps until they reach their destination. They should then perform the drill moving to their left (back to the original starting point).

Partial In-Field Drill / Force-outs

Level: T-Ball

Put Players at SC, 2B, 1B, and P positions. Coach should hit grounders to SC and 2B. After ball is fielded, players should throw to 1B to simulate an out. 1B should make throw back to P. Focus on getting P to pay attention, and 1B player to make play and return ball to P quickly.

Rotate Players around the field (SC -> 2B -> 1B -> P -> SC)

Variation 1: Put Players at 2B, 1B, and P. Work on making outs on the right side of the IF. Coach can hit balls to 2B, 1B, or P. Players should make the out at 1B and get ball back to pitcher.

Variation 2: Put Players at 3B, SS, and P. Work on making force outs on the left side of the IF. Coach can hit balls to 3B, SS, or P. Players should make the out at 3B and get the ball back to the pitcher.

Cover Home Drill

Level: T-Ball

By the midpoint of the t-ball season, girls will start to see the importance of making a play at the plate. They also will be better able to make accurate throws and catch the ball. This is a simple drill that could make a huge impact during a game, either in making an out at the plate or in stopping a run from scoring. It also reinforces the importance of making accurate throws and being able to catch the ball. It works best in a small group.

One player should be placed at P. One player should be placed at SS. The rest of the team should line up behind the SS position. The coach should hit or roll a ball to SS. The Pitcher move to cover home plate and be ready to receive the ball. The SS should field the ball and throw home. Once the ball is caught, the P should simulate a two-handed tag.

Rotation: SS -> P -> End of Line

Tag-Out Drill

Divide Team in Half. Half should line up in shallow RF, Half in shallow LF. First person in each line plays 2B and SS positions. Coach-Runner A starts on 1B. Coach-Runner B starts on 2B. Coach C should roll balls to 2B. Coach D should roll balls to SS. 2B and SS players should field balls and tag the coach-runners. Make sure fielders have the ball before they try to run with it! Teach them to make two-handed tags.