

## **Up-Backs.**

The player starts facing the coach, a few feet in front of them. Send the player back (drop stepping) to their glove side and throw a ball well over their head so that they work on going back on the ball. As soon as they catch or miss the first ball, you will throw another well in front of them so they will come forward hard. Hopefully they will catch both but I have had great success with my players because it creates a challenge for them. The kids really get into it and give a good effort while producing some conditioning and some fly ball work.

You can decide on what to do with the first ball once they catch it so they can still use two hands coming forward if possible: I get them to toss it to the player who went in front of them (coming back to the line). After a few times of this, they will be winded.

## **Outfield Relay Race**

**Set-Up:** Split the team into two groups. Have one group spread out evenly along the left field foul line between home plate and the left field foul pole. Have the other group spread out evenly along the right field foul line between home plate and the right field foul pole. The player from each team that is at home plate starts with a softball.

**Execution:** On the coach's signal, the player at home plate throws to the next player up the line. That player then turns and throws to the next player. Those steps are repeated until the ball reaches the player at the outfield foul pole, at which time the steps are reversed until the ball again reaches the player at home plate. The first group to have their ball reach home plate is considered the winner.

**Considerations:**

- (1) I usually have the ball make several cycles to the outfield and back before declaring a winner (in other words, the winner is the first group to have their ball make it all the way to the outfield and back three times)
- (2) You cannot skip players. If a player misses a throw, the next player in line cannot retrieve the ball for them. The player that missed the ball must retrieve it themselves and throw it to the next player.
- (3) Pay close attention to throwing form. This is an especially good drill for having players take a throw, pivot correctly, and then throw.
- (4) You can use more than two groups in necessary. For example, a third team could spread out between home plate and center field. As long as the total distance covered is the same for all groups then any number of groups can work.

## BURN YOUR BUDDY

Divide your team into two (2) smaller teams. Teams with 4 to 20. Set them up across from each other approx. 60-70ft. apart. You can use cones to mark a sideline boundary. Throw short hops to each other trying to get the ball past their opponent. We do it at the end of every practice, 2 out of 3 losers pick up all equipment. The girls love it.

Rules of play:

Ball must short hop at least once before predetermined line

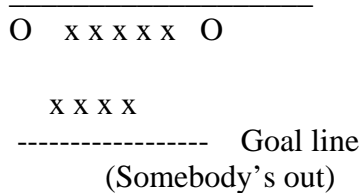
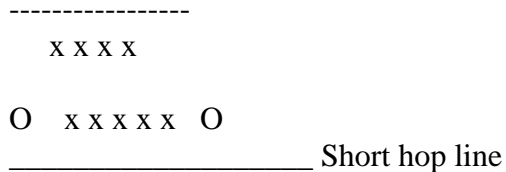
Ball caught in the air - thrower is out

Ball getting past all defenders - Player who misplays ball is out

Ball thrown out of bounds - dead ball nobody out

If more than one player misplays ball team decides who is out

Can even be done indoors



## Catcher Can

Use a large Rubbermaid outdoor garbage can, tipped over at home plate facing center field. Place the players in a line in center field, and have them throw the ball home (one at a time) trying to throw the ball into the garbage can. End the practice with this drill, and have a reward (candy, soda, gum, etc) for the player (if any) that makes it in the garbage can. You can decide how many times to go through the line.

## Outfield drill

We have the girls' line up in left field. The coach hits first ball to left the fielder who throws to second, then runs to center and coach hits another fly ball. Fielder throws to third then runs to right and coach hits another fly ball. Fielder throws to home and then runs around home plate and gets back in line.

This gives your outfielders lots of practice at all of the out fielding positions.

## **Best Outfielder**

This works with the JV team, 16u & 14u teams. I call it "best outfielder". I set up a sock net or hitting net just to the third base side of home plate. The coach stands near home plate and hits flies or grounders to right field. Every player takes their turn one at a time. The idea is the girls must cleanly field the ball and throw it into the net (crow hop); one or two bounces depending on how deep the player is. Any miscue the player must sit down. When you get to the last player standing, they also must complete a clean play or it starts all over again. The winner gets bragging rights. The banter and competition can get wild and fun, especially if an infielder wins. You can also do this with a twist, "best infielder". The players set up at the short stop position and then must cleanly field and throw the ball to the first basemen. The coach is the judge of what a clean play is, you can emphasize that certain mechanics must be done correctly. This is a favorite of the girls, its fun and breaks up the routine.

## **Tennis Ball Catch**

My kids (8 and 9 year olds) were having a hard time with fly balls. I will share the drill I used to help with these deficiencies. For fly balls I noticed that my kids were afraid of the ball. On the few occasions they were getting their gloves on the ball, they were not using two hands and the ball would pop out. I'm sure that this is not an uncommon problem. I would like to say that I came up with this idea but it was given to me by a friend. I took a tennis racket and hit fly balls to the kids with tennis balls. They were not afraid of the tennis balls so they got in the proper position to make the play. They soon found out they could glove a fly ball. But they then found out that the bouncy tennis ball would pop out if they did not use two hands.

## **Outfield Work While Conditioning**

You need a player in left field, second base (with a ball) and third base. You need a player catching and a fungo hitter at the plate. A ground ball is hit to the left fielder who throws it home. The left fielder runs into center field where the second baseman throws a fly ball. The player catches the fly and throws to second. The player then runs into right field where the second baseman throws a ground ball toward the foul line. The player fields the ball and throws to third base.

## **Blind Fly Drill**

We do one called the blind fly drill. I have players run directly in front of and away from the coach. The coach says left or right and the kid must break that way. The ball is thrown the same time the direction is stated. Kids learn to react quickly to fly balls over either shoulder.

## **Outfield Throwing Drill**

Align everyone, except a pitcher, a catcher and an infielder at 2B, equally across the outfield at the distance you want the players to throw. Each player takes a ball to the outfield when they go. The pitcher is stationed in her cut off position, the catcher is set to make a tag at home plate and the infielder is stationed at 2B to take a throw.

The player closest to the foul line in left field tosses her ball a short distance in front of her, runs to pick it up and makes a throw to home. The catcher, judges the throw, if it is on line to the plate says nothing, lets the ball come home where she makes the tag on a virtual runner. If the throw is off line the catcher calls "Cut Two", the pitcher cuts off the ball and throws to second base. In either case, once the play is finished, the ball is thrown back to the player in the outfield who made the throw. The next player in line then makes her throw. After all players have thrown, switch pitchers, catchers and infielders with players from the outfield. The drill can be repeated as many times as desired.

This drill practices several skills: throwing from the outfield, judging whether to cut off a throw, making a tag at home plate and cutting off a throw and throwing to 2B. Challenge the players to get 100% of their throws on line and hit the cutoff person. On throws through to the catcher, focus on good, strong, one bounce throws. Insure that the pitcher takes the proper position to cut off the throw and the catcher sets up properly in front of home plate.

## **Outfielders Drill**

### **Drop Step / Cross Over**

One outfielder stands facing you (approximately 5 ft) in "ready position". Coach holds out ball with arm straight out and then moves ball to either the right or left side. Player's first step is to drop back with the foot the side the ball is on. Player continues on cross over step until coach moves the ball to the other side. Player then drops back with the other foot and does the cross over step. Coach moves ball from the left side to the right at least 4-5 times and then throws a high fly ball to the side the player is doing the cross over step. If player has time they should catch the ball, plant their feet and make a good throw. If player is quick enough, they can come back to the ball and time it and make a good throw. Each player takes a turn. Coach should throw 4-6 times to each player depending on your group size. Player's should use quick feet work and go at full speed.

## **Hula Hoop Drill**

I coach younger girls 8-10 but have also used this for some of the older ones for different reasons. The purpose of the drill is to assist younger kinds in judging the balls trajectory on fly balls and build confidence in them to keep their glove arm down when they are running.

Each girl has a hula hoop around their waist. The coaches stand back with a bunch of tennis balls and throw pop flies. Girls try and get the ball to land inside the hula hoop.

## **Relay Home**

Here's a great drill that combines fielding fly balls from left field, hitting the relay, base running, tagging up and tagging out a runner at home. You'll need a left fielder, third baseman, catcher and a runner. The runner starts out on third base. A coach hits a fly ball to left field, the runner has to tag up and try to beat the throw to the plate. The left fielder has to catch the ball and hit the relay for a throw home to tag the runner. It teaches the runner to tag up on fly balls and go when the coach says GO. It teaches the outfielder to set up his catch for a good throw to the relay. It teaches the relay man how far out he should go and to turn glove side to make the throw home and lastly, it teaches the catcher how to setup at the plate for a tag.

## **Throw Them out Drill**

Center fielder, first baseman, catcher and third baseman. All other players' line-up behind each position and rotate. A fly ball is hit to the center fielder who will throw the ball home. The first baseman assumes the cut-off position and the catcher has to be vocal on lining him up and if they want the ball to be cut-off. The throw is either cut-off and thrown home or to third or the throw goes through to the catcher. The catcher then throws to the third baseman.

## **Helmet Hits**

I have used this drill for years. Works great for the younger girls, but my JV girls love it to. This drill is just trying to get their feet under a fly ball. I have them put on batting helmets. I use tennis balls, throw them up in the air, and they need to move side to side, front and back to get under the ball so that the ball hits you off the top of the helmet. You still need to stress turning and running properly on balls over the shoulder and hopefully you line up so that the ball hits your helmet. We divide up into teams and play a game. They get 1 point for a helmet hit, minus 1 point for a miss. The winner only have to do 10 push ups, while the losers have to do 20.

They seem to have a lot of fun, and it does get their feet under the ball.

## **Outfield Drill**

This is to correct poor tracking and slow starts to a ball in flight. Line your outfielders in any outfield position. We use a pitching machine to sail balls deep into the pocket or burn a line drive into the gaps. The girls must learn to take off just before the ball goes into play from a ready position. They stand at ready, both feet moving in anticipation. They must react to the ball as soon as it comes off the bat so they are locked on the strike zone with such concentration that when they explode toward the ball is a reaction not a thought.