

Practice Efficiency



The Evolution of Youth Sports

- The game has changed
 - Technology has improved
 - Education early
 - “Parental support”
 - Private coaches for every athlete
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Practice and Techniques Today

- Current methods are drill drill drill
 - Station and circuits
 - Have a question? Look on YouTube
 - Everyone is an expert!
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Improving the Way Coaches Teach the Game

- Remember coaches are parents
 - Coaches need educational tools to be better prepared
 - Stop teaching “shortcuts” to avoid errors
 - It is not about winning at this stage
 - Coaches are TEACHERS of the game!
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Potential Obstacles

- Everyone wants to learn from someone who is knowledgeable of the game
 - Varying “opinions” make it difficult to coach kids
 - Lack of organization leads to inefficiency
 - Players not learning anything new at practice, or they are not improving
 - Players are not prepared for practices and/or games
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Solutions

- Identify the goals for each of the players for the season
 - Each week focus a specific set of elements which will help each individual reach the set goals
 - Conduct organized and efficient practices
 - Select the appropriate drills
 - Teach the defensive tactics of the game
 - Encourage players to use educational materials
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Set Offense and Defense Goals for the Season

6 U

Contact off Tee

Throw Properly

Catch Properly

Understand Base Running

Understand force outs and tag plays

Set Offense and Defense Goals for the Season

8U

Contact off Pitcher
Throw and Catch Properly
Force Outs and Tag Plays
Bunting
Basic Defensive Strategies

Set Offense and Defense Goals for the Season

10 U

Power Hitting

Bunting to locations

Live Plate Base Running

Intermediate Defensive Strategies

Set Offense and Defense Goals for the Season

12 U

Power Hitting

Intermediate Base Running

Bunting for Sacrifice and Hit

Basic slapping

Intermediate Defensive Strategies

Set Offense and Defense Goals for the Season

14 U

Power Hitting

Hitting and Slapping to Locations

Advanced Base Running

Advanced Defensive Strategies

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Power Hitting
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Bunting for Sacrifice and Hit
Basic slapping
Intermediate Defensive
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14 U

Power Hitting
Hitting and Slapping to Locations
Advanced Base Running
Advanced Defensive Strategies

Keep the Big Picture In Mind

Identify the main goals for the season. Each week focus on a dynamic or a set of elements which will help each individual reach the set goals.

Week	Offense Goal	Offense Drills/Lessons	Defense Goal	Defense Drills/Lessons
1	Stance/Grip on bat	Tee work on boards	Throwing/Catching	Throwing progression
2	Contact off Tee	Tees middle/in/out	Grounders	Fielding progression
3	Eye/Hand Coordination	Soft Toss/Front Toss	Fly Balls	Tosses front/sides/back and then off bat
4	Bunting	Catch ball with bat	Infield Situations	Situations with runners
5	Hitting Live	Machine and Live	Infield/Outfield Situations	Situations with runners
6	Base Running	Signs and Running Situations	Relays	Throwing to Cut-Off, Lining Up, Relays, Cuts

Example of Practice Itinerary (6U)

4:00-4:10 Jog and Stretch

4:10-4:25 Throwing (on knees, Ts, T step, Throw Long)

4:25-4:35 Base Running (H-1, H-2, H-3, H-H)

4:35-5:00 Offense Stations (3 stations/ 8 min intervals /4 kids per group)

- 2 Tees hitting into nets (middle)
 - 2 Tees hitting into nets (in and out)
 - 2 Double Tees hitting into nets (middle)
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Example of Practice Itinerary (6U)

5:00-5:20 Defense (Separate infield and outfield)

Infield

- Slow Rollers (Triangle with feet and glove)
- Moving into the slow rollers
- Moving into faster rollers

Outfield

- Toss up and fielders move into ball, catch on throwing side

5:20-5:35 Defensive Situations

- Grounders – throw to 1B

5:35-5:45 Wrap Up and Clean Up

Example of Practice Itinerary (8U)

4:00-4:10 Jog and Stretch

4:10-4:25 Throwing (on knees, Ts, T step, Throw Long)

4:25-4:35 Base Running (H-1, H-2, H-3, H-H, 2-H)

4:35-5:05 Offense Stations (6 stations/ 5 min intervals / 2 kids per group)

- 2 Tees (middle)
 - 2 Tees (in and out)
 - 2 Double Tees (middle)
 - Soft Toss (high and low)
 - Front Toss with wiffles
 - Machine Bunting
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Example of Practice Itinerary (8U)

5:05-5:30 Defense (Separate infield and outfield)

Infield

- Star Drill (C-2B-3B-1B-SS-C)
- Grounders in a line (P/1B/3B up closer and 2B/SS farther back)

Outfield

- Toss up and fielders move into ball, catch on throwing side
- Traps

5:30-5:50 Defensive Situations

- Runners on 1 and 3 (grounders and flies)
- Bunt Defense

5:50-6:00 Wrap Up and Clean Up

Example of Practice Itinerary (10U)

4:00-4:10 Jog and Stretch

4:10-4:20 Throwing (on knees, Ts, T step, Throw Long)

4:20-4:35 Base Running (H-1, H-2, H-3, H-H, 2-H, delay H-2)

4:35-5:05 Offense Stations (6 stations/ 5 min intervals / 2 kids per group)

- 2 Tees (mid thigh inside and outside)
 - Tennis Ball Bounce
 - Double Tees (middle)
 - Soft Toss (high and low)
 - Front Toss with wiffles
 - Machine
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Example of Practice Itinerary (10U)

5:10-5:25 Defense (Separate infield and outfield)

Infield grounders

- Partners- slow rolls middle, backhand and forehand
- Grounders in a line (P/1B/3B up closer and 2B and SS farther back)

Outfield flies and grounder traps

- Quarter Backs and Drop Steps
- Traps when no runners on and run-throughs when runners are on.

5:30-5:50 Defensive Situations

- Bunts with no runners and runner on 1
- Infield grounders with no runners, runner on 1
- Fly balls with runner on

5:50-6:00 Wrap Up and Clean Up

Example of Practice Itinerary (12U)

4:00-4:10 Jog and Stretch

4:10-4:20 Throwing (on knees, Ts, T step, Throw Long)

4:20-4:35 Base Running (H-1, H-2, H-3, H-H, 2-H, delay H-2)

4:35-5:05 Offense Stations (6 stations/ 5 min intervals / 2 kids per group)

- 2 Tees (low inside and outside)
 - 2 Tees (high in and out)
 - Bunting off coach
 - Soft Toss (high and low)
 - Front Toss with wiffles
 - Machine
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Example of Practice Itinerary (12U)

5:10-5:30 Defense (Separate infield and outfield)

- Infield –Around the Horn Drill and Grounders forehands and backhands
- Outfield – Communication Drill and Hit the Bucket Drill

5:30-5:50 Defensive Situations

- Bunts with no runners 1, 2 and 3
- Infield grounders with no runner on 1, 2 and 3
- Fly balls tag ups and hits in the gap

5:50-6:00 Wrap Up and Clean Up

Efficient & Effective Practice Plans

- Design practices like a lesson plan down to the minute
 - Select drills that develop on those needs/weaknesses
 - Players must experience game situations BEFORE they actually play in a game!
 - Build practice plans that include both drills and defensive tactics, so the players get an understanding the mechanics and then apply those mechanics in live situations
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Preparing Players For Practice

- Think of the game of softball like a math class. Preparation and practice is the homework and the games are the tests!
 - If you want players to learn their position(s), give them materials to study at home. Parents may get involved in the education process.
 - Preparation puts ownership on players and parents- Accountability!
 - Tell the players in advance what they are working on at the next practice, so they come prepared.
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Teaching Defensive Situations

- “Defense keeps you in the game until your offense shows up.”
 - Coaches are teachers of the game. Know the material before teaching it to the players.
 - Teach the fundamental plays before progressing to intermediate and advanced situations.
 - Discuss the situations, explaining where the throws should go and where everyone is to go.
 - Use diagrams and runners to show the plays in action.
 - Quiz the kids regularly on where they should be going on certain plays.
 - Players should know how to move on each play, the concept of getting lead runners, how to back up throws, communicating with each other when going for balls, etc.
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Teaching Defensive Situations

- Executing correct defensive tactics takes time and a lot of repetition. They will be practicing these tactics for years and years!
 - **ALLSTARIQ SOFTBALL** breaks down almost every conceivable play (fly balls, grounders and bunts).
 - Check out **ALLSTARIQ SOFTBALL** at iTunes, Google and Kindle.
 - Find PLAYMAKERS books on the ASA/USA Marketplace at: <http://www.teamusa.org/usa-softball/about/asa-usa-softball-marketplace>
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