



**Spring 2012
Coaches Manual**
(ver. 1/24/12)

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Overview

Welcome to Fall Softball at Morgan Falls, home ballpark for hundreds of families throughout Sandy Springs, Dunwoody, East Cobb, Roswell, and other nearby communities. SSYS Softball is a family-friendly rec program for players of all skill levels. Our program is volunteer-run, and our most important volunteers are our coaches.

If you are coaching this season – thank you for stepping up! You and your fellow coaches are embarking on a rewarding journey that will have a positive impact on a bunch of great young ladies. Whether this is your first time coaching softball or you already have some experience under your belt, we have a comprehensive set of resources in place to help you have the most rewarding season possible.

You are holding in your hands the SSYS Softball Coaches Manual, which has the full library of drills our program uses to teach proper softball fundamentals.

NOTE: This Coaches Manual is also intended to be a resource for those parents who are not able to coach their daughters' teams this season... going to the batting cage or playing catch at home with your daughter ends up being some great bonding time!

Guiding Principles

Good Sportsmanship at All Times

- Players: Follow the “Golden Rule” – do unto others as you would have done to you
- Parents and coaches: Absolutely no confrontational words or acts between adults
- Home plate umpire is the primary authority to resolve issues during games; otherwise, please bring any issues/disputes to attention of League Director

Fun & Fundamentals

- The girls can have fun simply by being at the ballpark with their friends... but they have great fun when they play the game the right way with proper fundamentals.

Focus on Growth, Improvement and Learning to Apply Oneself

- True success is doing your best.
- Anything worth doing *well* is worth doing *poorly at first*...
 - If we walk around with the notion of only taking on things we can do well the first time we try it, we'll miss out on incredible opportunities in life.
- Games are won in practice.
- It's not how you start, it's how you finish!

Preparation

- Whether for practice or a game, coaches should come to the ballpark with a plan.

Coaching Tools

- SSYS Softball has adopted a set of '*Instructional Drills & Games*' (next section of this document) for our coaches to implement in team practices.
- Common set of drills/games that we use and continue to teach every season.
- Most are intended as fun "games" rather than heavy-duty "drills".
- Categories: Conditioning Stretches, Warm-up Throwing/Fielding Exercises, Throwing Drills, Fielding (Infielders), Fielding (Outfielders), Hitting, Pitching Warmups.

Coaches are encouraged to use a "Pod System" to structure practices.

- Prior to practice, divide the girls into three groups or "pods" based on skill level.
- Most likely, you will have many drills/games that all three pods do together, while for other parts of the practice, each pod is performing different drills.
- Players should be engaged at all times – no standing around watching!

ALWAYS come to the ballpark with a plan!

- Have your practice laid out IN WRITING.
- Be sure to think out your practice "flow" ahead of time.
- Be willing to make adjustments based on "what's working" with the girls.

Thanks again for making this investment of your time and energy to coach our girls. We are committed to providing you with the resources you need to be successful. Morgan Falls is your home ballpark, and you have an equal stake in it as everyone else. Please be sure to let a board member know if you see any opportunities for improvements to your program.

INSTRUCTIONAL DRILLS & GAMES

A. CONDITIONING STRETCHES

A1. Line Stretches

Arm Circles – Front circles, back circles, big circles / little circles.

Backwards Sprints – Stay balanced with weight over toes, pick up feet.

Butt Kickers – Slow run, small steps, feet up to butt, fast feet.

Giant Skips – Long skips, arms pumping, covering as much ground as possible.

High Knees – Knees up to hands, with arms being held at 90 degree angle.

Lunges – Work on stretching rear leg. Make sure that front knee does not extend over foot (can cause knee problems); keep knees back.

Pelvic Rotation – (In-to-out / out-to-in) similar to high knee, but rotate knees/legs in-to-out and out-to-in while knees are in the air.

Toe Touches – Legs fully extended up to hands, fast walk.

A2. Boot Camp – Line up four cones ~30 feet apart; sprint to first cone and do 10 frog jumps (hands above head, hands to ground and feet kicked out behind you; feet kicked back in to squat position and in one motion high jump then repeat 10 or more times), sprint back to starting point then sprint to second cone and do 10-15 push-ups; sprint back to starting point then sprint to third cone and get into “plank” position (face down on stomach, with forearms in 90 degree angle holding up body, legs extended fully, body in straight line, with butt level with body) and hold for one minute, sprint back to starting point; Repeat all cones one more time.

A3. M Drills (ages 7 and up) – Line up five cones in the shape of an “M” ~40-50 feet apart; cone 1 to cone 2 → backwards sprint; cone 2 to cone 3 → bunny hop; cone 3 to cone 4 → toe to heel (slide) with knees bent, while a coach is rolling grounders to player who fields with bare hands and throws back to coach (~5 balls, possibly two coaches); cone 4 to cone 5 → front sprint; arrive at cone 5 and do 10-20 pushups (or 20-30 sit-ups); (Cone variations – face down on stomach and “pop-up” into ready position; one legged hop; sideways criss-cross grapevine).

B. WARM-UP THROWING/FIELDING EXERCISES

B1. Side-to-side (all ages)– Partners 8-10 feet apart; thrower down on one knee, fielder in ready position – thrower rolls ball (hard) to both sides (forehand/backhand) of fielder while fielder uses proper footwork to field ball and throw back to thrower. Two balls will make this drill faster and harder for fielder. Do for 60-90 seconds and then switch thrower and fielder. Repeat process several times. **Variation:** Have thrower stand up and one hop balls to fielder on both sides of fielder, once again stressing footwork and glove work. “Soft hands” and/or “swooping” motion for backhand, making sure that feet come all the way over to ball; and body turned with glove on ground coming up for ball; rather than body turned and glove going down to field ball (a little more advanced).

B2. Throwing from Knees (ages 10 and under)– Partners, each on right knee (left knee for left-handed throwers) ~10 feet apart practicing wrist snaps to each other. Minimal arm movement only wrist until loose; then ~15-20 feet apart, still on knee, wrist snap w/arm movement to complete throws. NOTE: during each of these exercises, players elbow to be in line with shoulder during throws; watch for “laziness” as players elbow falls towards side of body.

B3. Throwing to Partners (all ages)– Partners line up 20-30 feet apart – make good throws, elbows even with shoulders, step foot pointing towards target, wrist snap, follow through with arm and feet. Catch ball IN FRONT of body with glove arm extended. Continue to back players up while throws get longer, trying to keep throws on a line rather than “lollipop” throws. Finish warm-ups at 50-60 feet apart. Longer throws will continue strengthening arms. Be careful not to make long throws before players are warmed up.

B4. Throwing Tunnel (ages 7 and up)– one ball, two groups, single file lines, facing each other, 15-20 feet apart. First player throws underhand to opposite facing player and then goes to the back of the opposite line (follow your throw); Receiving player throws back to next player in line and goes to the back of that line (again, follow your throw), underhand throws are to be no higher than chest high on a line, but without killing the receiving player; 15-20 completed chest high throws in a row will end the game. Bad/missed throw causes counting to start over. Make sure to keep 15-20 feet of distance between the two lines. Cones are helpful in that throws have to be made from behind the cones. **Variation:** Dart Throws – made from behind ear- same motion as throwing a dart; push with forearms.

C. THROWING DRILLS

C1. Around the Horn (Bases)(ages 9 and up) – Two players at each base. Any extra players line up at home plate. Extra ball next to each base (for bad throws). Catcher starts the game by throwing to Player 1 at 3B. Catcher follows her throw to third base and gets in line. Player 1 catches ball from catcher, makes a swipe tag at the base and throws to 2B. Player 1 then follows her throw and goes from third base to second base and gets in line. 2B makes swipe tag at the base (from first base side) and then makes a throw to 1B. 2B follows her throw to first base and gets in line. 1B catches ball, makes swipe tag and throws back to home where process is repeated. For a bad throw or bad catch, extra balls should be kept at the bases so as to keep the game moving. Set goals for number of consecutive throws to be made without bad throw or catch. Change direction of throws, starting at home and going to first base.

C2. Flamingo/Crane Drill (ages 10 and under)– Player starts throwing progression by holding the ball back above her shoulder and “showing the ball to the outfield”. Next, she lifts up the knee of her “off leg” (righty thrower lifts her left knee, lefty lifts her right knee) and keeps it lifted so she is standing balanced on one leg like a flamingo or a crane, also keeping glove pointed at target. Throwing hand in launch position (ball outside ear) for 2-3 seconds. Then, as she begins to move her arm forward to throw the ball, she steps forward with that off foot so that her weight shifts to that forward foot just as she releases the ball, with the toes of her forward foot pointed at her target. Bring glove hand back toward body to emphasize shoulder-hip-knee rotation. For righty, her left shoulder, hip & knee point at her target, and when she’s done throwing, her right shoulder, hip & knee should be pointing at her target.

C3. Hit the Bucket –(all ages) Two groups – half are positioned at shortstop and other half are positioned at second base. Mark off a starting point that girls must stay behind. Each group alternates players throwing to home plate where two stacked buckets are located – each time a player hits the top bucket on a bounce, 1 point is awarded; each time a player hits the bucket without a bounce, 2 points are awarded. First group to 10 points is the winner.

C4. Pickle Drill (11 and up)– Player at 1B, player at 2B, runner in between the two; player at 3B, player at home plate, runner in between the two; pitcher starts with the ball on the mound and goes after either of the runners, trying to chase the runner back to the base behind them, rather than advancing the runner to the base in front of them. Pitcher throws to appropriate fielder, and learns to follow her throw. Fielder then chases runner to next base causing a “pickle”. Once the runner is either safe or out, then player with the ball, goes for the other runner on the other side of the infield. Players will continue to rotate positions in this drill. Teach all players to always follow their throws, chase the runner back to the previous base not the next base, and don’t hold the ball too long.

C5. Relay Lines (ages 9 and up)– Two-Four teams, 5-7 girls per team – Line up girls 20-30 feet apart, single file lines using the entire field if necessary. Each team line is equal distance apart. First girl in each line throws the ball to the second girl in her line. Second girl catches the ball and TURNS GLOVE HAND SIDE and throws to the third girl in line and so on. Once the last girl in the line receives the ball, she sprints to where the first girl is standing, the line shifts and the process is started again. Game ends when the first girl in line gets back to the first spot where she started. During the course of the relay throws, EVERY girl in the respective lines must touch the ball. A throw cannot be made from the first girl to the third girl, thus bypassing the second girl. EACH girl must turn to the correct (glove hand side) when she throws to the next person in line.

C6. Star Drill (ages 9 and up)– Use for throwing the ball around after strike-outs. Catcher throws to 1B, 1B to SS, SS to 2B, 2B to 3B, 3B back to P. Repeat several times. Timed? Pushups/situps for bad throws or catches.

C7. Third to First Drill (ages 7 and up) – Line up five balls between third base and home plate. Player starts at third base and goes to FURTHEST ball (closest to home) picks up ball (teaching player to try and drive the ball into the ground with their hand to pick it up and not miss), throws to 1B, runs BACK to third base, goes to next furthest ball, throws to 1B, returns to third base, and so on, until all five balls have been picked up and thrown to 1B. HOWEVER, for each bad throw to 1B, another ball is “dropped” closer to home plate so that the player will have to backtrack to get to that ball and make the throw to first base. **Variation:** Allow player one or two bad throws before extra balls are dropped. By the time a player has gone from third base towards home plate five or six times, they are pretty tired. Also, as the player is running towards the different balls, the coach can call out “second base” or “first base” depending on where you might want the throw to go.

C8. Throwing Circle (ages 9 and up) – 8-10 girls in a circle covering the entire infield all the way to the grass, each with a ball. One girl in the middle without a ball (fielder). As each girl throws the ball to the fielder, the fielder throws the ball back to the person that it came from while going around the circle. Once everyone has thrown to the fielder, next girl comes into middle and the process is repeated until all girls have been in the middle. Objective: fielder to receive the ball with both hands in front of her AND feet set in throwing position, all while transitioning the ball to throwing hand while moving arms back into throwing position and making good throw back to player. In other words, receive the ball, have feet already set in throw position, transition ball from glove hand to throwing hand and make good throw back to player AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. For each bad throw or bad catch then everyone does pushups. Set a maximum per round. Typically 2-5 for each miss with a maximum of 15-20 per round. **Variation:** More girls in the circle (but takes longer to go all the way around). Move circle in closer for younger girls or out further for older girls. Throwers can throw hard grounders to fielder OR one hoppers to fielder.

C9. Timed Transition Throwing (ages 9 and up) – Similar as the throwing circle, however done in groups of two. Partners pair off and stand 30-40 feet from each other. Make 12-15 fast transition throws without a miss. Use stop watch to see how long it takes. Speed, accuracy and strength of throws are all important. **Variation:** How many transition throws can be made in 45 seconds? One minute? Or push-ups/sit-ups if 12-15 consecutive throws aren't made.

D. FIELDING (INFIELERS)

D1. Across Body Drill (9 and up)– 4-5 girls on a team, can do two teams at a time. Player 1 gets on second base to receive throws from Player 2. Player 2 lines up close to second base heading towards third base. Coach kneels near pitcher's mound and rolls ball towards Player 2, leading Player 2 towards third base. Player 2 fields ball as running towards third base and throws across body back to 2B. As soon as ball is out of Player 2's hand, coach rolls another ball (leading Player 2 towards third base) and the process is repeated 4-5 times until Player 2 gets all the way to third. Then Player 1 switches and to thrower, and new player is 2B. Same drill can be done between first and second base, with girls running towards second base while throwing across body back to 1B.

D2. "Alligator" Triangle Drill (ages 9 and up)– Draw a triangle in the dirt big enough for player's left foot to touch one point, right foot to touch second point, and glove to touch third point when player leans forward to field ball. Coach rolls ball to player. Player's glove on ground, out front, back flat, knees bent and balanced, alligator with hands, pick and keep out front, hand on top, grab with fingers, move feet (right then left) and toss ball back to roller. **Variations:** Once player consistently fields ball in triangle, switch up with: Forehand – Step open, bend front knee, head down, use glove only (not two hands), have switch feet balanced and in line to toss back to tosser. Backhands – Crossover and jab step. Bend front knee, chest over knee, head down. Short hops – Stay down and pick it out front where it bounces or the ball will eat you up! Use two hands (alligator!)

D3. Bad Throw Drill (ages 9 and up)– Coach kneels on pitcher's mound facing first base. One fielder is at 1B with two backup players behind the base on either side. One catcher stands next to coach. Coach proceeds to throw line-drives, one hoppers, high throws, low throws, etc. to fielder on BOTH sides of the base, over her head, between her legs, everywhere. Coach will give fielder just a couple of seconds to get ready (back to the base to make play) before next ball is thrown. More one hopper's to either side of fielder is most beneficial. Trying to get the girls to "leave the base" to make the play is also discussed here. When done quickly, fielder's legs and knees will begin to burn. More aggressive fielders will want to learn to start diving here as well. Great drill for all infielders covering a base. **Variation:** This drill can be done simultaneously at third base as well. Be careful on the throws coming back from the fielders.

D4. Charging Home Drill (ages 7 and up)– Coach & catcher at home plate. Line of girls at second base, single file, with one girl going at a time. Player 1 starts where grass and dirt infield meet, with everyone else on the grass. Coach hits ball to Player 1, and Player 1 charges ball to field it and throw back to catcher. As Player 1 is fielding and throwing back to catcher, coach is hitting next ball to Player 1 as she continues charging the plate. Process is repeated until Player 1 gets all the way to home plate (usually should take 4-5 balls), then coach throws a pop-up, Player 1 catches it, gives back to coach, sprints to the edge of the infield (where she started) and goes through drill again. By two times through drill, Player 1 is ready to switch. If a ball is not fielded cleanly, player lets ball go through and coach hits another one.

D5. Circle Game (all ages)– Girls line up in a big circle with all feet touching the player next to them. Legs spread apart, knees bent, fielding position. One ball is **ROLLED** to any player in the circle except for either player standing next to the girl rolling the ball. The idea of the game is to **ROLL** the ball between a players legs and have it go out of the circle. If the ball is missed, the player who missed it is out and the circle tightens. This is done until there are only two or three players left. Once there are only two players left, they stand facing each other and try to roll it through the others legs. The winner can be rewarded.

D6. Cone Drill (ages 9 and up)– (Introduction to Diving – conduct drill on grass/outfield) Two cones on ground 20-25 feet apart. Player in between cones, ready position. Coach on knees 10-15 feet from player. Catcher next to coach with 15-20 balls on ground. Coach rolls and throws balls to player in between cones, from side to side, high and low, establishing no set pattern, and player fields as many as she can with return throws to catchers. Line drive throws or rolled grounders will be balls that players need to “get dirty” for. Use two other players to “back-up” player in the middle. If backup players are not collecting any passed balls, then coach is not challenging player enough. Typically after 15-20 balls, player will be ready to switch out.

D7. Cross-Field Grounders (ages 9 and up)– Two coaches & two catchers – one coach stands in foul territory, behind base line between third base and home (closer to home) while hitting to players at the 2B position who field the ball and throw back to catcher next to coach. Other coach stands in foul territory behind base line between home and first base while hitting to players at shortstop who field the ball and throw back to their catcher. Each player gets 3-5 balls and then rotates to other line **CROSSING** the field **BEHIND** second base every time. Balls are hit as soon as player releases previous ball from hand. Both coaches are hitting simultaneously. ***Variation:*** Hit balls on each side of player making them move horizontally as well as right to them. Hit balls that might be out of reach of players to get the extra effort. Adjust speeds that are being hit, however, careful not to hit ball soft, as could put player in line with other coach. Add 1B and 3B players and have the 2B throw to 3B and have the shortstops

throw to 1B instead of the catcher. 3B and 1B will then throw to their respective catchers.

D8. Diving Drill (ages 9 and up)– Similar to Cone Drill above. Two cones set up closer than above, around 10 feet. Player starts with two knees on the ground. Coach starts closer to player than above, around 5-10 feet away. Coach rolls balls to both sides of player getting them used to starting to two knees and falling and/or stretching out to get to grounders rolled to them (10-15 balls). Once completed, then player starts in catchers “squat” position and process is repeated, with coach rolling balls to both sides of player and player springing from squat position to dive position (10-15 balls). Then player starts in standing position BUT with knees significantly bent and process is repeated. However, at this point balls should be rolled as well as tossed a little higher to be caught in the air. This is usually going to be taught to girls at older ages.

D9. Dollar Game (all ages)– Position entire team around the infield. Take turns hitting one ball to each player. If the ball gets PAST the player, then that player is out. If she blocks it in front or on the side of her, then she is still in. Go around the infield in order until only one girl is left. The winner gets \$1.00. The kids normally love this game.

D10. Double Play Footwork (ages 11 and up)– Full infield takes positions. 2B/SS work on double play footwork. No more than two steps, catch ball with two hands, catch and step out of sliding lane. 2B will come across bag catching ball from 3B and stay behind on a ball from SS. SS will come across back-left corner on throw from 2B and stay inside on throw from 1B. 1B and 3B work on stretches and picks.

D11. Every Position Throws to Every other Position (ages 11 and up)– Advanced – must be worked out and written down prior to executing. Two hitters (Coaches) and two catchers (can be players)

Hitter 1 hits to: 1B throws Home
Hitter 2 hits to: 3B throws to 2B;

(Move Pitcher)

Hitter 1 hits to: SS throws to 1B
Hitter 2 hits to 2B throws to 3B

Hitter 1 hits to: P throws to Home
Hitter 2 hits to: 1B throws to 2B;

(Move Pitcher)

Hitter 1 hits to: 3B throws to 1B
Hitter 2 hits to: 2B throws Home;

Hitter 1 hits to: SS throws to 3B

Hitter 2 hits to: 2B (position) throws to 2B;

Hitter 1 hits to: P throws to 2B

Hitter 2 hits to: SS throws Home

(Move Pitcher)

Hitter 1 hits to: 1B throws to 3B (move-in 1B to field balls)

Hitter 2 hits to: 2B throws to 1B (use screen if available; use other 1B)

Hitter 1 hits to: SS throws to 2B

Hitter 2 hits to: P throws to 3B

Hitter 1 hits to: 3B throws to Home;

Hitter 2 hits to: P throws to 1B

D12. Find the Ball Drill (ages 7 and up)– Player lies down at shortstop position (closer to second base) with back to home plate. Coach stands near pitcher’s mound. Coach yells “go”, and hits the ball at the same time towards shortstop position. Player has to jump up, locate ball and field it, as quickly as possible, and make throw back to catcher. Then next player goes.

D13. Rapid Fire Drill (ages 7 and up) (another favorite) – Catcher, coach, fielder, two back up players. Coach stands 40-50 feet from fielder. Two backup players stand behind fielder to retrieve balls that fielder misses. Coach hits balls “rapid fire” style to fielder. Fielder picks up ball and throws back to catcher standing near coach. Coach does not hit next ball until first ball has left fielder’s hand, BUT, just as soon as the ball has left the fielder’s hand then coach hits next ball. Balls hit by coach should be hit on BOTH sides of fielder developing backhand, forehand and lateral movement. Balls should be hit hard enough to challenge fielder but not to hurt them. If backup players are not getting any balls to them, then coach is not challenging fielder enough. Typically after 20-25 balls, fielder will be “toast!” Rotate players. One of the backups moves to fielder. Fielder moves to catcher, catcher moves to backup position, etc. NOTE: In order for this drill to be effective, catcher must always try to keep two balls in their glove to feed to coach as coach is hitting. Need to start with as many balls as possible, usually 15-20. Backup players to HOLD balls until finished with fielder so that there are not too many balls being thrown back to catcher. **Variation:** Same game done with pop-ups. A little trickier for the coach to be able to hit consecutive pop-ups, but same objective of getting fielder to move in both directions as well as up and back. When doing pop-ups, another player is inserted as a “cut-off” between the outfielder and the catcher.

D14. Side-to-side (Spider Walk or Crab Walk)(all ages) – Set up two cones ~10 feet apart (or draw two lines in dirt) for player to operate between. Player gets in ready fielding position, weight on balls of feet, leaning forward, glove down with palm up.

Coach rolls balls to either side of player, while player shuffles feet in order to move sideways. Very small shuffle steps to ensure wide base at all times, toes always pointed slightly in. **Variation:** Quick Hands - Roll ball to both sides of partner – 15 – 20 times each, then switch. Make sure that girls are challenging their partner. Ball should be rolled fairly hard, enough to make the partner move her feet to get to it. Then one hop to partners. 15-20 balls each. Partners stand a little closer together for this exercise. Work on backhand and forehand.

D15. Triangle Drill (ages 9 and up)– Team 1: Catcher, 1B & 2B. Team 2: Catcher, SS & 3B. Coach 1 stands behind base line between third base and home (much closer to third base). Catcher stands next to coach. Coach 1 hits 10-15 balls to SS (who is playing very close to second base), SS fields each ball and throws to 3B. 3B returns balls to catcher. At the same time, Coach 2 stands behind base line between home and first base (much closer to home than to first base) and hits 10-15 balls to 1B who in turn throws down to 2B. (Note that while Coach 1 is hitting balls to SS near 2B, the throws coming from 1B to 2B should not be a factor). After 10-15 balls then switch as follows: Coach 1 (who moves down the third baseline towards home plate) hits 10-15 balls to 3B who now throws to SS covering second base (and SS throws back to catcher); and Coach 2 hits 10-15 balls to 2B (who is playing very close to the base) who fields and throws to 1B (1B throws back to catcher).

D16. Tweeners - Infield/Outfield (11 and up)– Six players at a time. Partner up. Each pair will be an infielder and an outfielder. They will switch, so it doesn't really matter, at first, if that is their true position. Three players in a row (infielders) and three players in row behind them (outfielders). There should be 30-40 feet between front row and back row. Also, make sure there is 10-20 feet between the infielders and outfielders. Coach throws a high pop-up between the first pair of infielder and outfielder. Infielder is to go back on the ball all the way until/unless she hears the outfielder call her off. If not, then she should catch it. If no one calls for the ball and the ball drops in between, then pushups are involved. Teach your infielders that they are to go after EVERY ball until/unless they are called off by the outfielder. Teach your outfielders that they need to be sure to call for a ball that they can get to because it is much easier to run in and catch a ball than to have to run out to catch it. Also, make sure that outfielders aren't calling for a ball too soon, when they really aren't sure they can get to it.

D17. Water Balloon Drill (all ages)– Another favorite especially for the younger kids. Pick partners. Demonstrate how to “cradle” by using a ball first and soft tossing to them. Then, with the water balloons, begin by facing each other ~5 feet apart. Make them complete 1-5 catches and then move them back another 5 feet and repeat. Make lots of water balloons, so that when misses occur, you can give out another balloon. Go until there are no more balloons and declare your winner. There is a pretty good chance that you may end up in the line of fire at some point.

E. FIELDING (OUTFIELDERS)

E1. Around the Horn Pop-Ups (ages 9 and up)– Group of players start behind first base. Coach stands at home plate with 5-6 balls in glove. First player starts off along the furthest point of the infield, running along the grass line. As she is running, coach is throwing pop-ups to her, one after another. As she catches the pop-ups, she catches and then drops the ball to the ground and the “trailing” girl picks them up as they work their way to third base. Coach should be able to get off at least 5-6 balls to fielder. Once player and trailer reach third base, next pair starts from first. Once everyone has gotten to third, then the drill starts over going from third to first, along the grass as far back in the infield as possible. Trailing girls goes first this time. Make sure that throws are far enough in front of players to challenge them and make them run to catch. Player should catch ball at head-height and in front (not over her head), stay behind ball and move explosively after the catch.

E2. Every Position Throws to Every other Position (ages 9 and up)– (Advanced) Must be worked out and written down prior to executing. Two hitters (Coaches) and two catchers (can be players).

Hitter 1 hits to: LF throws to 3B
Hitter 2 hits to: CF throws to 2B
Hitter 1 hits to: RF throws to Home

Hitter 1 hits to: LF throws to Home
Hitter 2 hits to: CF throws to 3B
Hitter 1 hits to: RF throws to 2B

Hitter 1 hits to: LF throws to 2B
Hitter 2 hits to: CF throws to Home
Hitter 1 hits to: RF throws to 3B

Each hitter to hit 10-15 balls per player. This format can be changed in many ways, but must be done ahead of time to make sure of safety reasons. Whole drill can take up to 45 minutes to complete.

E3. Follow the Ball (ages 11 and up)– Players get in line, next to coach, typically on either foul line in the OF. Every player has a ball. First player throws their ball to the coach, then gets 10-15 feet away facing coach. Coach holds ball in right hand, with arm fully extended and moves back and forth from left to right. As the coach’s arm extends to the right, then the player is back peddling to their left (with glove tucked), unless or

until the coach's arm moves to the left. Once it does, then the player has to shift to their right side, WITHOUT TURNING THEIR BACK TO THE BALL, (shoulders and head only) and continue back peddling (with glove tucked) in that direction unless or until the coach either switches directions again or throws the ball for the fielder to catch it. Typically two to three "switches" works well. To start though, only one switch and then a throw helps the fielder concentrate more on mechanics of changing directions (shoulders only), as well as running with glove tucked.

E4. On the Run, Full Turn Throwing (ages 11 and up)– 5-6 fielders at a time (or less). One fielder starts 10-15 feet in front of far left field fence (almost in foul territory). Coach starts 30-40 feet in front of fielder between fielder starting point and center field. (Coach will move somewhat during this drill). Coach is hitting balls towards outfield fence, leading fielder to their left (towards CF from LF), trying to place balls so that fielder's shoulders are perpendicular to the infield when the ball is caught and the fielder will continue turning their body in a full circle to get their feet set and make the throw back to Player 2. Coach will line up Player 2 and Player 3 as "relays" who in turn, will make the last throw back to a catcher (Player 4) standing next to the coach so that the flow of the drill is constant. As soon as the fielder throws the first ball to Player 2, the coach goes ahead and hits another ball to the fielder, once again, moving the fielder towards the CF part of the field. **Variation:** Sometimes to get this drill started, a coach may need to throw balls towards the fence and then use a bat once the players get a better idea of what they are trying to do.

E5. Outfield Rapid Fire (ages 11 and up)– Coach, catcher, fielder, relay player, two back-ups; Coach and catcher stand 100-150 feet from fielder. Relay player stands off to side of field halfway between catcher and fielder. Two back-ups are behind fielder. Coach hits pop-ups to fielder, who in turn catches (with two hands) and throws to relay player who turns and throws back to catcher. Coach hits another ball to fielder as soon as RELAY player has received first ball from fielder AND has TURNED towards catcher and is LOOKING at coach when coach hits next pop-up. Should happen pretty quickly. Balls should be hit to left, right, in front of and behind fielder so that fielder is "tracking down" the pop-ups and makes good throws to relay player. After 12-15 pop-ups, fielder should be dragging their tongues (so is the coach!!). **Variation:** Coach brings tennis racket and tennis balls to practice. Use 15-25 tennis balls if possible. If player does not use two hands to make catches, then tennis balls will usually bounce out of glove. Hit balls as high as possible. Hit as fast as fielder can catch and drop them. Once fielder catches ball, let them toss to the side or to another player close by. Try to make sure that fielder doesn't trip over balls on the ground as the drill progresses. Hit 20 +/- balls to each player. Then switch to hard balls.

E6. Short Pop-ups (ages 9 and up)– Have long single file line of players 50-60 feet from coach. When coach yells "go", first player in line takes off running towards coach. Coach then throws a "short pop-up" so that inbound player must sprint to get to. Player

catches, throws back to coach and next player in line goes. First player gets in back of line. Drill should move very quickly. **Variation:** Start players in close, have them sprint back to catch over head pop-ups. Make sure players are running with their glove tucked in to their arms, NOT OUT!!!

E7. Tweeners - Infield/Outfield (ages 11 and up)– Six players at a time. Partner up. Each pair will be an infielder and an outfielder. They will switch, so it doesn't really matter, at first, if that is their true position. Three players in a row (infielders) and three players in row behind them (outfielders) There should be approx. 30-40 feet between front row and back row. Also, make sure there is approx. 10-20 feet between the infielders and outfielders. Coach throws a high pop-up between the first pair of infielder and outfielder. Infielder is to go back on the ball all the way until/unless she hears the outfielder call her off. If not, then she should catch it. If no one calls for the ball and the ball drops in between, then pushups are involved. Teach your infielders that they are to go after EVERY ball until/unless they are called off by the outfielder. Teach your outfielders that they need to be sure to call for a ball that they can get to because it is much easier to run in and catch a ball than to have to run out to catch it. Also, make sure that outfielders aren't calling for a ball too soon, when they really aren't sure they can get to it.

F. HITTING

F1. ABC's of Hitting – Form, Position & Progression

F1A. Progression/Steps – Stance → Load → Stride → Heel Plant → Hips → Hands
→ Contact → Extension → Finish

F1A1. Stance

- Feet: Balanced, toes in, feet in straight line facing home plate every pitch.
- Knees & Back: Knees bent, back straight, as if sitting in a chair.
- Hands: Door knocker knuckles in straight line are a must. Hands a couple inches above shoulder, bat at 45 degrees (not wrapped, not flat back).

F1A2. Load

- Weight rocks to back foot, hands go toward catcher a couple of inches.
- Whole bat can be seen if batter's head is turned and looking straight back at catcher (don't wrap the bat around your head).

F1A3. Stride

- Stride with front foot, toe touch, keeping weight and hands back still.

F1A4. Heel Plant

- Back foot pressing against the ground (NOT squish the bug), back heel up and front heel down, knees stay in, weight transfers against the inside of front leg.

F1A5. Hips

- Actually turn both hips in direction of pitcher (i.e. "full hips") as you go through swing; when you merely "squish the bug", you don't get FULL hips. Full hips are most important on inside pitches so that you can get your hands through.

F1A6. Hands

- Must stay inside the ball at all times.
- Barrel above hands, hands above the ball (unless it's a drop ball, then you drop your barrel).
- Lead with elbow, knob of bat and keep barrel back to whip prior to contact.

F1A7. Contact

- Arms should be slightly flexed, with hands staying in handshake position.
- Extension: keeping hands in handshake position and progressing to arms extended out straight. Do not pull off with front shoulder, let hands work out.
- Shoulders square to home plate during contact with ball.
- Head looking down at plate after contact with ball.

F1A8. Finish

- After extension, roll then finish.
- Bat is dropped after contact, never thrown or let go of during swing motion.

F2. Butt of Bat to Ball – Should be done at same time as soft toss, or top hand bottom hand drill. Player gets in regular batting stance ready to swing into hitting net or batting cage. Coach explains to player that the “butt” of the bat is a “flashlight” and that the coach is going to soft toss balls to player, who is going to hit the balls with the butt of the bat BUT without “shining” the flashlight into the pitchers eyes. The butt of the bat should be coming down on the ball regardless of where coach is tossing, rather than the butt of the bat hitting the ball into the net (towards where pitcher would be).

F3. Fence Drill – Coach lines up as many players as necessary along a fence line. Each player will need a bat. Players need to be far enough apart so as full swings will not hit anyone. OLD BATS ARE BETTER FOR THIS DRILL - Hitters will each place a bat between their stomach and the fence. The bats should be held firmly against the fence by the hitter’s stomach. The hitter, WITHOUT TAKING ANY STEPS AWAY FROM THE FENCE, takes their bat and gets into their batting stance, again, without moving their feet. Each hitter then begins to swing its bat and should be doing so WITHOUT hitting the fence. If the hitters are hitting the fence then they are “casting” their hands and not making compact swings. Their “top hand” (right hand for RH hitters) is pushing outward instead of downwards towards the ball. Take 15-20 swings.

F4. Fence Drill – Part 2 – Each player will then align their rear foot (for RH hitters, then right foot) as far against the base of the fence as possible. Get into batting stance and begin taking additional swings. If bats are hitting the fence, then hands are dropping, thus causing the bat to go backwards, before it is going forwards. Once a pitch is on its way, then THE FIRST MOTION FOR EVERY GREAT HITTER WILL BE FORWARD, NOT BACKWARD!! (or downward). If the bat is hitting the fence on the “finish” that is fine, but it should not be hitting the fence on the front swing (start).

F5. Frisbee Lids – Throw Frisbee style lids (Margarine, Cream Cheese, small cool whip lids, etc,) approx. 10’ – 15’ from batter; Once again, to be able to hit a flying lid, thrown “Frisbee” style is trickier than it looks. Good concentration and hand to eye skill is involved. Great inside drill. **Variation 1:** Whiffle balls (all sizes, especially the golf ball size) to be thrown (as hard as practical underhanded) to hitters. Pitchers get approx. 15’ – 20’ from batters, Great inside drill. **Variation 2 (Advanced):** Soccer balls, volley balls, basketballs, etc. also to be used to throw to batter, as hard as practical, underhanded if possible, to batters; CAUTION: When a hitter is hitting one of the above type of large balls, they must hold the bat much tighter than they normally would. In other words, once contact is made with a large ball coming in fast to the batter, there will be much resistance and if the batter is not holding the bat tightly, then the bat can come out of the batters hands and hit them in the face or elsewhere.

F6. Golf Whiffles – 10-12 golf whiffle balls, PVC training stick (or “Thunderstick”) ~33in, 37oz. First, pitch 6 from side not front. Then pitch 6 from pitcher’s mound. Rest of group shags ball while batter hits. Purpose is to develop vision, to track the small ball all the way into the zone and hit the middle of small ball.

F7. Hit the Ball with Your Glove – Another favorite. For this drill you will need a live pitcher. This one can be done in a cage or just on the side of the field. Batter gets in batting stance 35’-43’ away from pitcher (depending on age). A catcher in full gear is also required for this drill. Pitcher will be pitching to catcher while batter is standing at plate, however, batter will get in its regular stance, but instead of holding a bat (with the three “V’s” showing, the batter will be holding a glove in the same position. The object is for the batter to catch the “pitched” ball in the same position and at the same time as she would hit it. Easier said than done.

F8. Hitting Machine – Hitter gets no more than 35’-40’ from machine. Have hitter take several cuts off of machine. Once hitter is making good contact with pitches, then hitter to move up 8’-10’ closer to machine. Then, after 5-10 pitches, hitter to move up another 5’-8’ so that hitter is close enough to machine to have to start its weight shift prior to coach putting ball into the machine. At this point, and depending on the speed of the pitch, the hitter is ONLY trying to make contact with the ball. After 5-10 pitches from this distance, then the hitter will return to its original starting point, and take 5-10 pitches from there, while making the necessary adjustments to “wait” on the pitch.

Variation: Move hitter away from plate to swing later, to hit to right field for an outside pitch, as well as closer to the plate to be swinging earlier to hit to left field. Reset hitter after each pitch as they will naturally move back to their normal batting stance. You may even want to adjust home plate rather than the hitter so that they face inside and outside pitches.

F9. Live Game Hitting – Make three teams with no more than 3-5 girls per team. Make sure that each team has one pitcher and one catcher (if possible). At any given time, two teams will be on the field at the same time. Each team gets to bat for three outs. Once your team has made its three outs at bat, then that team goes in the field and the next team comes in to hit. This can be done for multiple innings. Keep track of runs scored by each team and losing teams do pushups, sprints, etc.

F10. Three “V’s” – Everyone gets a bat and stands away from teammates so that no one gets hit. Bat rest on shoulders, very loose, very relaxed. Players lift hands only so that three “V’s” are formed. First “V” is formed between left side of players body, to left shoulder down to left bicep; Second “V” is formed from players left forearm to hands to right forearm; and third “V” is formed from right side of players body to right shoulder down to right bicep.

F11. Tennis Balls on a Bounce – To be done in a cage or on a field (or inside) – coach will stand approx 30' from batter and have batter hit a tennis ball off of a bounce. Coach needs glove. Fielders need gloves. Need harder type surface for this drill to be effective. In some cases, whiffle balls may also work. This drill is to teach the hitters to keep their eye on the ball.

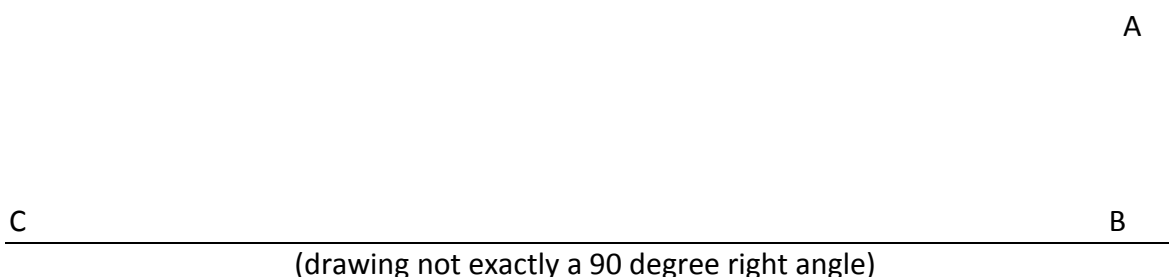
F12. Tee Drills

F12A. Baby Bats & Tees – Two tees, 2 baby bats, 10 balls at each tee. Outside pitch first, 5 bottom hand, 5 top hand, then switch partners. Purpose is to isolate hand/arm from shoulder/body. Elbow, knob, whip barrel to extension without pulling off. Focus is on bat whip with wrist and hand.

F12B. Inside Tees – 2 tees, 10 balls each tee, nets to hit into. Inside pitch, proper location (in front of their body but not outside the ball), barrel will drop for low pitch, hit through the ball not around the ball. Hitter looks at “pitcher” then eyes to ball on tee as swing starts. Purpose is to recognize location of ball at contact, use proper swing to hit inside pitch.

F12C. Outside Tees – 2 tees, 10 balls each tee, nets to hit into. Outside pitch, proper location (bat on bellybutton to tee), not too close to net, keep barrel above ball (top hand), hit through to opposite field. Hitter looks at “pitcher” then eyes to ball on tee as swing starts. Purpose is to recognize location of ball at contact, use proper swing to hit outside pitch.

F12D. Top Hand – Bottom Hand – Right-handed hitting players kneel down on right knee. With a very small bat (T-ball size if available), a tee and a hitting net, players will take 10-15 swings with only one hand at a time. Top hand (right hand for right-handed hitters) need to be in a “handshake” position when contact with ball is made. Not palms up; not palms down, but at handshake position. Upon contact with ball, shoulders should be parallel to the ball and the tee, without having opened. Once shoulders start to pull out, so does bat and so does power. After contact with the ball, eyes should be looking at the “tee” for two or three seconds, to make sure that head is not pulled out when swinging. Then, picture a 90 degree right angle. Three points on the angle. Top point is “A”, middle point is “B” and end point is “C”



HANDS SHOULD ALWAYS BE MOVING FROM “A” TO “C” NOT FROM “A” TO “B” TO “C”. Many players will drop their hands to the “B” position and then swing “under” the ball, rather than going from the “A” to “C” position and swing through the ball. **Variation:** From a standing position, place bat behind back with wrist holding bat tightly against butt. Then from a batting stance, turn hips, so that bat hits ball off tee. Repeat 15-20 times.

F12E. Volleyball/Trash Cans – 2-3 rubber trash cans, 1 volleyball at each trash can. Volleyball (or basketball) is placed on front part of upside-down trash can. Hitter takes full swing. Purpose is to hit through a heavier ball (not stopping on contact) and finishing your swing. Ball on front of trash can does not allow you to drop barrel (makes you keep barrel above hands and get on plane with ball).

F13. Toss Drills

F13A. Soft Toss – needs approx. 12 – 15 balls. With a hitter and hitting net (or batting cage)- Coach kneels in front of and off to side of hitter and tosses balls to hitter. Balls should be tossed slightly in front of hitter about midpoint of body. For inside pitches, coach can toss more to the front leg of hitter’s body or for outside pitches, coaches can toss to hitter’s back leg. While tossing, coaches are looking for butt of bat coming to ball vs. hitter dropping hands and swinging under ball; shoulders staying square as hitter swings; hips moving with hands. I will tell hitters that from now on, hips and hands are connected, and wherever your hands go, your hips better be right with them. Compact swings and moving hands from the A” to “C” position, without “dropping” their hands is what is needed for successful hitting. **Variation:** Coach uses two balls at a time to “toss” to girls. When tossing to the girls, the coach will call out either “top” or “bottom” and that is the ball that the player must hit. OR if possible, have two colored balls at a time (total of 6 – 8 of each color, yellow and white) toss one of each color at the same time, and call out which color for the player to hit.

F13B. Drop Toss – needs 10-12 balls – hitting net (or cage) - Coach stands on bucket or small chair and holds ball above head, lined up with batter. Coach drops ball from high position and player hits away.

F13C. From Behind Toss – need 10-12 balls, hitting net (or cage) – Coach kneels behind batter. Batter gets in stance ready to hit. Batter may look straight ahead BUT not backwards at coach. Coach tosses ball straight towards net/cage and batter hits ball. Batter must rely on “peripheral” vision to “pick-up” ball and hit.

F13D. Front Toss – Need 15-20 balls – To be done in batting cage or on field – Coach to stand (or some coaches like to sit) behind pitching net. Set up net approx. 15-20 feet from home plate. Coach underhand pitches to batter. Batter gets 15-20 swings. Start batter off with 3-5 bunts. If being done on field, have one position player on 2B with bucket (“bucket-girl”). All other positions will throw to 2B, who will put balls in bucket, empty bucket at pitching screen or swap out full bucket for empty bucket, and then get to be the next hitter. Rotate position players to 2B to be “bucket-girl” CAUTION – Because you have a “pitching net” on the field, the bucket-girl is pretty protected by the net as well, however, you still want to make sure that you are not tossing balls to batters if the bucket-girl OR ANY player has their back turned away from batter!!

Variation 1: Coach to sit on bucket 7-10 feet from batter, up the 1B baseline and soft toss to batter who will hit into the field of play. Fielders shag balls and throw back in to coach. No bucket-girl here, because no net is being used. **Variation 2:** Use tennis balls with colored numbers. Must track tennis ball and call out color and number as soon as possible.

F13E. Rapid Fire Soft Toss – (Advanced) 10 balls at a time – hitting net or batting cage – Player gets in regular batting stance. Coach tosses ball to batter. AS SOON AS batter has swung at first pitch, coach then tosses 2nd ball to batter and so on all the way to 10 balls. Note: batter will not or should not try to get bat, hands, shoulders and hips all the way back again in between pitches, but more of shoulder and hands only; This is strictly a “hand speed” drill for batters to try to improve their bat to ball quickness. ALSO: make sure that after you have done this drill 2, no more than 3 times in a row, that you go through a “regular” soft toss drill at normal speed so that the batter will get their form back. While doing the rapid soft toss drill, some of the batters “form” will be lost in order to get their hands to the ball.

G. PITCHING WARMUPS

G1. Wrist Snaps – Starting from about 5-10 feet away from the catcher, solely use your wrist to snap the ball to the catcher. Make sure to focus on the spin. This is the most important component of the pitch. The faster and tighter the ball spins, the faster and more accurate the full pitch will be.

G2. T Drill – Move back to about 15-20 feet away from the catcher. Start with your body in an open position. This means that your feet and body should be facing the general area of 3rd base, and your arms and body should be on the same line. Start with both arms up (forming a “T”). Pick up your foot and take a slight step, bring your arm through, snap the ball, and then follow through with your hand going to your shoulder. The most important things to focus on are wrist snap, keeping everything (your arms, body, and feet) on the “**Power Line**” (an imaginary straight line from the rubber to the catcher) especially when coming through from the T to the snap, and following through.

G3. K Drill – Move back to about 30-35 feet away. Start with your left arm pointing towards the catcher, and your right arm towards the sky, with your left leg out (for a righty), ready to take your step, like a “K”. Like the T Drill, you will then swing your arm down, snap, and follow through. You should naturally step while swinging your arm through and your hips should end in the closed position (facing the catcher). One new important thing to focus on is making sure to stay tall. This means to try to reach your arms out as long as you can, making sure that your throwing arm is never bent (until, of course, the follow through).

G4. Arm Speed Drill – Move up to about 10-15 feet away. Position yourself with your right knee on the ground and your left leg pointing out towards the catcher (for a righty). Start with your glove hand pointed towards the catcher and continue with three arm circles, snapping on the third time around. It can be difficult to get the release point right, but after a few tries you should get closer. Each arm circle should be quicker than the previous. This emphasizes the fact that the quicker your arm circle is, the quicker your pitch will be. BUT- make sure your arm does not go crazy. It MUST stay on the Power Line!

G5. One Footed Weight Drill (and Progression) – Move to about 25-30 feet away. Start in an open position (body facing 3rd base) and on your right foot (for a righty). Make sure to be balanced, and then continue with a normal T or K drill style pitch. Try to not put your other foot down until you have released the ball. This is working on one of the most difficult parts of the pitch: your weight shift. When starting out, most pitchers tend to lean forward during their pitch, especially at the end. However, the correct form is to have your weight balanced throughout the pitch.

After you have perfected this drill, you should progress to the next step. Move back to the mound, with your right foot up against the front of the rubber. Again balance on your right foot, but this time bend your knee as much as you can, and hold that position for 3 seconds. Then, continue with a full circle, and then release, waiting until your release to allow the other foot to hit the ground. This will continue to work on weight shift, but it will also force you to use your legs to push out, giving you more power behind the ball.

G6. Distance Drill – After you have completely warmed up, including full pitches, take three big steps past the normal mound. Do three full pitches from here, and continue to take three big steps back until your pitch can no longer reach home plate. Depending on how far back you are able to go, you may have to make a minor adjustment to your release point (release a little bit later). This drill works on wrist and arm strength. After a few times, you should be able to get to the middle of center field!

G7. Endurance Drill – This would be most effective if done at the end of a pitching session. You have to do 15 pitches, but with no stopping. You should try to use your legs to push out as much as possible. The catcher should stand up to be able to get you the ball back as quick as possible. There should be at most 2-3 seconds between pitches. If you're not out of breath at the end then you didn't do it quick enough! Give yourself a few minutes break, and then do it again.

G8. Wall Drill – This is a drill that you can do at home by a wall or at practice by a fence. This is especially useful if you commonly find yourself with your arm far away from your body instead of on your Power Line. Get up really close to a wall in an open position (your body faces the wall. Do your arm circles over and over focusing on keeping your arm as close to your body as possible. Try to work up to full speed arm circles.

A few little tips:

- Release Point- You should release every single pitch right next to your hip at the lowest point of your arm circle.
- If you find that your pitches are going way too high- you are releasing too late!! Try releasing a little bit earlier.
- If you find that your pitches are going into the dirt- you are releasing too early!! Try releasing a little bit later.
- If your pitches are going way inside or outside, work on keeping your arm close to your body and on the Power line and keep your step straight ahead.