

Created by Drew Caldwell- Ohio State University P.E. student  
Based on the Play Practice book by Alan Launder, Human Kinetics  
20 tasks and progressions to teach beginning- Softball

### **Fielding Stance**

1. **Infield (Focusing)** - As the simulated pitcher is going through his/her form to throw the ball, the fielder prepares himself/herself by walking forward 2 steps with knees slightly bent, weight on the balls of the feet, body and eyes focusing in on the simulated batter, and glove held out in front at waist level, opened upwards. Once the fielder recognizes the ball is hit, he/she will adapt to the speed of the ball, set up by dropping the glove to the ground (down to up), flex knees even more, and back should be level with the ground. **Outfield (Focusing)** – As the simulated pitcher is going through his/her form to throw, knees are flexed, glove held at waist level, and eyes are focused in at the simulated hitter. Once the fielder recognizes the ball is hit, he/she will sprint to the location of the ball, set up behind the path of the ball, waiting for the ball with glove open and off hand under the glove to prepare to catch it.

### **Fielding – Infield**

2. **Ground balls in front, throw to the base (Shaping, Focusing)**- The player will field a rolled ball from 15 feet away out in front of his/her body, glove side foot slightly in front of the non – glove side foot, head down, and funneling the glove up into his/her mid section. Once the ball is fielded, the fielder will quickly align themselves to the base he/she is going to throw to, with knees slightly bent, stepping in opposition of throwing arm, and throwing the ball in a overhand,  $\frac{3}{4}$  type fashion towards the targeted base.
3. **Ground balls to forehand, throw to the base (Shaping, Focusing)** – The rolled ball from 15 feet away will force the fielder to move towards his glove side, forcing the fielder field the ball out in front of his glove side foot with knees bent, head down, and funneling the glove up into his/her mid section. Once the ball is fielded, the fielder will quickly align themselves to the base he/she is going to throw to, with knees slightly bent, stepping in opposition of throwing arm, and throwing the ball in a overhand,  $\frac{3}{4}$  type fashion towards the targeted base
4. **Ground balls to backhand, throw to the base (Shaping, Focusing)** – The rolled ball from 15 feet away will force the fielder to move towards his non glove side, forcing the fielder to cross over with this glove side foot and turning glove in a backhand fashion. The ball will be fielded out in front of his glove side foot, with knees bent, and head down. Once the ball is fielded, the fielder will quickly align themselves to the base (first base) he/she is going to throw to, with knees slightly bent, stepping in opposition of throwing arm, and throwing the ball in a overhand,  $\frac{3}{4}$  type fashion towards the targeted base.

5. **Fielding batted ground ball, throw to the base (Enhancing)** – This drill mixes everything in working on the three different ways to field a ground ball along with the ball being batted. The students will field the ball in a position on a regulation softball diamond with the fundamentals they had learn in the previous 3 exercises while making the throw to the specified base. The student will try to achieve as many as successful trials as possible without making an error fielding and throwing the softball.

### **Fielding – Outfield**

6. **Thrown fly ball at the fielder (Focusing, Shaping)** – The fielder will set up behind the thrown ball from 20 feet away and catch it with the glove and non glove hand covering over top (two hands!). Once the ball is caught, the fielder will quickly align himself/herself with the base or player he/she intends to throw, steps in opposition (just like the infield drills) and makes the throw with an overhand type arm motion.
7. **Shoe string catches (Focusing, Shaping)** – Recognizing the ball is in front, the fielder sprints forward, catches the ball on the run with glove open facing upward. Once the catch is made, the fielder will quickly stop, and align himself/herself with the base or player he/she intends to throw, steps in opposition (just like the infield drills) and makes the throw with an overhand type arm motion.
8. **45-degree drill (Shaping, Focusing)** – This drill is for tracking a ball hit behind the fielder. The fielder is square in front of the thrower. When told to go, the fielder opens up at a 45-degree angle with their lead foot (lead foot depends on which way the ball is thrown). On the run the fielder catches the ball with his/her glove opened upwards in front of his/her body. Once the ball is caught, the fielder will quickly align himself/herself with the base or player he/she intends to throw, steps in opposition (just like the infield drills) and makes the throw with an overhand type arm motion.
9. **Field batted fly ball throw to the base (Enhancing)** - This drill mixes everything in working on the three different ways to field a fly ball along with the ball being batted. The students will field the ball in a position on a regulation softball diamond with the fundamentals they had learn in the previous 3 exercises while making the throw to the specified base. The student will try to achieve as many as successful trials as possible without making an error fielding and throwing the softball.

### **Baserunning**

10. **Positioning and reacting (Shaping, Focusing)** – Players will start in a leadoff position on a base. Leadoff position is left foot on the base with the right out in front, hands held in a runner's position, and eyes focused in a home plate. Once the ball is hit (or rolled) the player takes off for the next base.

11. **Running to first base (Shaping, Enhancing)** – Players will start in the batter’s box, take a simulated swing and run down through first base. The player will get three attempts to set a personal best time (stopwatch).
12. **Running and rounding the bag (Shaping, Focusing)** – Players will start in the batter’s box, take a simulated swing and run down to first base. 2/3 of way down the line, the player will “belly – out” creating an angle to make the turn to second base, and he/she will continue on to second base.
13. **Controlled Situational Running/Fielding (Enhancing)** – Players will have to react to a batted ball by the teacher – Runners will run, and the defensive team will have to react to the batted ball and the runner’s movements. This helps both teams to learn particular scenarios on both sides. Once the defensive team has recorded three outs, then the sides switch.

### **Batting**

14. **Tee – work w/softball (Shaping, Focusing)** – The player will hit off a tee into a net focusing on hitting mechanics. Hitting mechanics include head down, swinging the bat level through the zone with two hands, weight over the back, rotation of the hips and back foot, and follow through over the front shoulder.
15. **Cage – Hitting w/volleyballs (Shaping)** – The player will hit in a batting cage for the next drill. Using all the mechanics that he/she learned in the cage, the player will hit volleyballs that are thrown by another player underhand.
16. **Open field hitting game (Enhancing)** – On a regular softball diamond, players will be divided up into teams. The offensive team has to achieve 4 consecutive hits without getting put out by the defense (Teacher pitches). Singles are worth 1 point, Doubles worth 2 points, Triples are worth 3 points, and Homeruns are worth 4 points. However, if the offense is not able to achieve 4 consecutive hits, they lose all the points for that round. The teams switch sides when the defense forces 3 outs.

### **Pitching**

17. **Target practice (Focusing)** - By stepping with his/her non-throwing foot, and throwing the ball underhand with a 6 – 12 foot arc to a catcher with no batter, the designated pitcher for each team will practice pitching mechanics, as well as accuracy by trying to hitting the target provided for them for the catcher. A progression of this drill would be to add a stationary batter into the mix just so the pitcher could get use to someone in the box.
18. **Open field hitting game (Enhancing)** – This drill is done exactly the same way that it was done under the “Batting” heading. The only difference is that the players will actually be pitching, not the teacher.

## **Game – Like Scenarios**

19. **6 v. 6 Wiffle ball game (Enhancing)** – All softball game rules apply. The reason it is only 5 on 5 is because it is played as a strictly infield game because the modified field can be covered by the infield team due to the short flight distance of a batted wiffle ball. Field dimensions are brought in from 60-foot bases to 50-foot bases. The teams will play a 3-inning game – the teams with the most runs at the end of the game wins.
20. **9 v. 9 or 10 v. 10 Softball game (Enhancing)** – All softball game rules apply, played on a regulation softball field. The game will consist of 3 innings – the teams with the most runs at the end of the game wins.