

Special Olympics North America

Sample Drills

Catching and Fielding Drills

Positioning the glove

- Practice adjusting the glove position depending on the location of the ball.
- The player starts with the glove above the head at twelve o'clock with the fingers pointed up.
- If the glove is on the left hand, the player makes a circle move clockwise to three o'clock, then six o'clock and continuing around while keeping the pocket open as if to catch a ball. The player keeps the elbow bent and the glove close to the body in a catching position.
- For right-handers at three o'clock the fingers are still pointed up. As the hand dips below the waist, the fingers gradually rotate down until they point directly at five o'clock. As the hand crosses the midline of the body at six o'clock, the hand rotates over to a backhand position (balls caught on the side of the body opposite of the glove are caught backhanded). The player rotates the thumb down toward the ground, keeping the palm open to the ball. At nine o'clock, the fingers have again rotated to an upward position.
- When the player is familiar with the proper positioning, a partner tosses them balls to catch in various positions. The toss can be underhand.

Cone Rolls

- Place two cones about 12 feet apart to serve as targets and boundaries.
- A tosser with a ball stands about 15 feet in front of each cone.
- A fielder takes a position about midway between the cones and several steps in front of them so that the cones will not interfere with their movement.
- The first tosser rolls a ball toward a cone.
- The fielder sidesteps to the ball, gathers it in, returns it underhand to the tosser, resets in the middle and then goes the other way to field a ball rolled by the second tosser.
- The fielder must concentrate on footwork and staying square behind the ball.

Killers (for outfielders)

- Partners stand about 30 feet apart. One partner tosses a ball to various spots in front of the fielder, who runs to get behind the ball, makes the catch and makes a good return throw to the tosser.
- The tosser throws the ball for one minute before the players rotate.
- The goal is to get the fielder to be moving continuously throughout this drill.
- This is a good conditioning and concentration drill for outfielders.

Two Hand Fielding Drill (primarily infielders, but can be useful for outfielders as well)

- Construct a "glove" by taking a piece of cardboard or thin plywood and cutting a 4"-5" wide by 5"-6" long rectangular piece.
- Staple or otherwise attach a piece of elastic to the back of the glove allowing enough room for an athlete to slip their hand in between the elastic and the glove, but tight enough to keep the glove on the athlete's hand.
- Stand 20-30 feet from the athlete and throw them ground balls in different areas (directly at, to the left and to the right of the athlete).
- Emphasize proper fielding technique – getting in front of the ball, knees bent and fielding the ball with both hands.
- Athletes who attempt to field the ball with only the glove hand will find it impossible to do so and will soon learn the value of using both hands when fielding ground balls.
- This drill can be used as a corrective drill if athletes are not demonstrating the proper technique in other drill work, simulated games or scrimmages.

Throwing Drills

Release and Spin

- Partners face each other from about six feet away. One player holds the ball in his/her throwing hand with proper grip and puts the throwing-arm elbow in his/her glove at about chest height. Partners throw the ball back and forth at least 25 times. This exercise isolates the wrist action so the player can feel this particular component. The athlete should feel the snap of the wrist action. Emphasize proper release and check the vertical spin.

Bent Knee

- Partners take positions 15 feet apart and kneel on the throwing-arm side leg. The other leg is bent with the foot flat on the ground. The thrower points his/her glove at the target and throws the ball using proper arm action (emphasize circle for proper arm action). The receiver catches the ball and repeats the action.

Quick Feet and Hands

- The players start with the ball in the glove in the correct fielding position (knees shoulder width apart and bent, glove on the ground between the knees) and the throwing hand just outside of the glove. The player takes the ball out of the glove quickly and jumps to the throwing position (emphasize turning body toward the target and not remaining square – target can be a coach standing in front of the line of athletes). The athlete should freeze in that position.
- This drill can also be done with a partner with the athlete throwing the ball easily to the partner instead of freezing in position.

Triangle Catch and Throw

- Three players form a triangle.
- The player at the right-angle corner catches the ball from the thrower in the proper receiving position.
- After catching the ball, the player focuses on turning the feet and shoulders toward the third player (target), who is to the right and throws to athlete.
- After catching the ball the third player turns to throw the ball to the first player continuing around the triangle.
- Continue the drill until each player has thrown the ball a set number of times.
- If the player fielding and throwing is left-handed, the receiver is to the left so that the player fielding and throwing has to turn their body.

Hitting Drills

Hitting off a tee

- Place the batting tee about four to six feet away from the backstop or any other section of fence.
- If using multiple stations, there should be a minimum of 10 feet between stations.
- The coach sets the tee at waist height for the batter.
- The coach places a softball or a whiffle ball on the tee for the batter to hit.
- Batter takes proper stance.
- Batter hits the ball off the tee and into the fence.
- Coach watches for proper stance, swing and follow-through.
- Each batter receives about five or six swings.

Soft Toss hitting

- Athletes take the proper batting stance approximately four to six feet from the backstop or any other section of fence.
- The coach is slightly in front of and to the side of the hitter.
- The coach tosses whiffle balls out in front of the batter at waist height.
- The hitter attempts to hit the ball into the backstop or fence.
- Coach watches for proper grip, stance, swing and follow-through.
- Each batter receives about five or six swings.
- Try to limit the number of people at each station in order to keep things moving and keep the athletes attention.

Pitching Drills

Pitch and Catch

- Have the catcher set up behind the plate and set a target for the pitcher.
- Have the pitcher pitch the ball to the catcher, keeping an eye on the catcher's mitt for the target, but being more concerned at this point with proper mechanics.
- Have a coach stand beside the pitcher and observe the mechanics, correcting any mistakes in the motion.
- Have each pitcher throw about 10 – 15 pitches then switch.
- This drill can also be done with a batter in the batter's box to provide a more realistic game situation for the pitcher. Don't have the batter swing at the pitch.

Target Practice

- Place a target (half-barrel or small bucket) behind home plate.
- Have the pitcher pitch the ball trying to get the pitch to hit inside the bucket. This will work on not only getting the pitcher to aim for the target, but having the pitcher put some arc on the ball as a flat pitch will not have much chance of landing in a bucket.
- Have the other pitcher retrieving balls for the first pitcher.
- After about 15 attempts (or all the balls you have set aside for this drill have been thrown) have the athletes switch positions.

Jump the Fence

- Place a four foot high obstacle or "fence" about mid-way between the pitching rubber and home plate. Make sure that the pitcher can still see the catcher's target through the fence.
- The fence can be as simple as a stick or a piece of wood propped up on each end to achieve the desired height (could be set across two trash cans, etc.)
- The fence should be as wide as the pitcher's mound.
- Have the catcher set a proper target for the pitcher.
- Have the pitcher focus on getting the ball over the fence to ensure proper arc while aiming for the target provided by the catcher.

Note: *Pages 17-43 of the Softball Sports Skills Guide have additional teaching tips and techniques for catching, throwing, pitching, base running and hitting. Review those pages and add or replace any of the suggested drills with more appropriate drills or training techniques from the SSP if necessary.*