

GAMES

Turning practice drills into games avoids boredom and keeps the players interested while they are having fun learning.

PICKOFF GAME

This is a good drill for all aspects of stealing. Put players at each of the infield positions. Have the rest of the team put on helmets and line up at 1st base. The base runners will each run the bases in this pattern: lead off, steal. Only one runner on the bases at a time. The first runner gets ready on first. The pitcher pitches the ball and the runner takes a lead. The catcher attempts a pick-off at first and the runner tries to get back in time. On the next pitch the runner attempts to steal second and the catcher tries to throw her out. The runner proceeds with a big lead at second, stealing third and big lead off at third. The final pitch for that runner is a deliberate passed ball/wild pitch which gives the catcher and pitcher a chance to practice this play.

To encourage the runners to take big leads and to teach them what they can get away with we will place little pieces of candy in the dirt as a challenge. If they can grab the candy and get back safely, they can keep the candy. After they have done this drill a couple of times, allow the runners to do a "delayed steal" on their lead offs. If the catcher throws to first, the runners can attempt to go to second. This way the catchers learn to recognize the delayed steal and run the baserunner back.

The drill gives the catcher a lot of practice throwing to the bases, allows the infielder to practice positioning themselves for and putting on the tag, and allows the base runners a chance to practice leading off, sliding, and themselves before practice officially started while the coaches were taking care of some paperwork. The coaches decided to just sit and watch them coach themselves.

SPRINTING GAME

This drill is for conditioning and control.

Player set-up

A catcher stands between first and second base with a discard bucket. The rest of the team stands between third base and home with gloves.

Ball set-up

Place three balls on the first baseline, spacing them a few feet apart. Do the same on the second baseline. Place 5 balls in the center of the field, vertically between catcher and player.

Drill

This drill should be run one player at a time. The player sprints to any ball on the field, and throws it to the catcher. (If the throw is not good, the ball is replaced by another player for a second try.) They then sprint back to where they started, and go after another ball. This goes on until all of the balls are in the bucket. This drill should be tiring, and should be run at a sprint. Time the players if they need motivation. The other players on the team should be cheering on the runner.

THE RUNNING GAME

My daughter calls this game, "The Running Game". It is also as old as the hills, but we use it almost every night in practice.

Have half of the team line up at second base and half the team line up at home. On the signal, one player from each team runs the bases until she reaches the base she started out at. When she gets there, she tags the next runner in line and she runs the bases. This is done until all the runners have run. Whoever reaches their base first wins. The other team has to pick up the bases.

This is usually the last thing we do at the end of practice.

PICKLE GAME

Place two bases 40-60 ft. apart. Only three people are needed. One at each base and one to be the runner. I would recommend using tennis balls to avoid getting hurt.

The fielder with the ball should begin at the bag opposite the runner. Starting with his foot on the bag, the runner gets a 3-5 sec. lead toward the base in front of them. After they have touched the first base and gets a start back to the other base the fielder they just ran from throws the ball to the other fielder to try and tag the runner out. If the ball gets past the fielder or they drop it, the runner can turn around after touching that base and run back to the other. The runner would just go back and forth as many times they can until they get into a pickle. If the fielder catches the ball, they can run the runner back to the base like a real pickle situation in a game. The runner can not get credit for this base because they didn't touch the other base, yet.

THUNDER GAME

This game has been played ever since the start of time. It is played with 2 teams. One team is at bat with a tee or soft-toss, the other team has one fielder on third base and one on first base. The batter hits the ball off the tee or from a soft-toss as hard as she can and runs as many bases as she can until BOTH fielders have touched the ball.

Keep score by counting bases reached before the ball is touched. After all batters have batted, switch sides.

The goal of this game is to touch the bases as many times as you can without being tagged out. The runner must keep track of how many times they touch the base before a fielder tags them out. When that runner gets out, they rotate positions so that the fielders can be the runner. After everyone has ran, they compare their scores (bases touched).

BARNEY GAME

I got this drill from our current Hitting Coach, Coach Burney. It is the most fun game we play and the players absolutely LOVE IT!!!

You get a Barney (or any other stuffed animal, but Barney works the best because they hate him) and put him on a chair by 1st base. If you have a net, put the net behind the chair to stop the balls, otherwise put the chair near home. Have a coach hit ground balls to shortstop.

The player fields the ball and makes a throw trying to knock Barney off the chair.

The ball must be fielded properly or no points. Have a time limit (about 5 minutes) and keep track of how many hits Barney gets. We have a rule that if the players can beat the previous record, we run (not me of course, I coach the pitchers).

GUTS GAME

The girls have created their own names for this drill - guts, kill your teammate, the grounder game. Simply divide the girls into two teams. Have the teams form two lines about 40 to 60 feet apart, with players shoulder to shoulder three feet apart. Place something two feet from each girl at either end of both lines. These are the goal posts. The goal posts can be buckets, cones, balls, or the parents. Hand a ball to one of the players. To play the game, the girls take turns trying to throw grounders through the opposing line. They can throw as hard as they want (make sure they're spaced far enough apart).

The rules are fairly simple: The player who fails to prevent the ball from going past the imaginary line between goal post is out of the game. The team who loses all its players first loses. The ball must bounce in front of the players to count. If a player's ball is caught on the fly without bouncing she is out - if it is dropped, she stays in. If a ball goes through the line without bouncing, it has no effect. Any throw outside the goal posts has no effect.

As players are eliminated move the goal posts in until the last player has a goal roughly six feet wide. Hint: if the girls learn to charge the ball, it gives one of their teammates an opportunity to back them up. If there is a question as to which girl allowed the ball to get through the line, the opposing team decides.

PEPPER GAME

The name of this game is Pepper. A coach gathers a small group of players which are only a few feet from him/her. The coach then hits or bunts the ball to the players in any random order, then the players must use quick reactions to retrieve the ball and accuracy to pitch, this pitch is only a toss, for the coach to hit again. You do this drill to improve the players reaction time. You have to do this drill as quickly as possible and the pace will increase as time goes on, and the players improve. This can also be used to help players with bunting by having a player bunt the ball in place of the coach.

THAT GAME DRILL (The team loves this game!! It's a nice change of pace.)

We have called this drill "that game" because my daughter and I don't have a name for it.

You split your team into 3 teams it works well with 12 players and 2 coaches. The first team goes to the outfield, the second team plays the infield and third other team is up to bat. One coach pitches and one catches, you can also use the tee if you only have one coach, he/she needs to play catcher, or you can play pitcher and catcher after the ball has been hit. The pitcher pitches 3 pitches and the batter hits the ball and has to run all the bases, the team who touches the ball first has to field the ball and pass the ball under their legs until the ball has been passed to every girls on their team and the last girl has to throw the ball to the catcher before the batter/runner makes it home. The throw home has to be a good throw and the coach

receiving the throw home can stand on home plate and can stretch to catch the ball but can't leave the plate. If the ball arrives before the runner then the home team has one out—three outs and they go to the outfield and the infield team is up to bat, the kicker is that the pitcher can pitch as soon as a batter is up to the plate with a helmet on so if your team was just at bat you better be running to position yourself in the outfield. We end up with girls not even taking their helmets off, but they also learn teamwork, they have each others gloves ready for their teammates on their way to the field and they usually have the girl with the best arm line up at the end of the line to assure a good throw home, coaches beware, this game has just pooped me out, especially when you are playing pitcher and catcher!!!!
Oh yah, the batter only gets 3 pitches, if she doesn't hit a fair ball after 3 she is out. And no bunting.