

SKILLS THAT SCALE

DRIVELINE
YOUTH BASEBALL
PRACTICE GAMES

DEVEN MORGAN, BEN HARLEY & MICHAEL O'CONNELL





Copyright © 2021 by Driveline Baseball

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission from the authors.

Always consult your physician before beginning any exercises program. This general information is not intended to diagnose any medical condition or to replace your healthcare professional. Consult with your healthcare professional to design an appropriate exercise prescription. If you experience any pain or difficulty with these games or exercises, stop and consult your healthcare provider.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: 7

Skills that scale: 8-11

Game Layout: 12-13

Hitting Game Notes: 14-15

Bat Speed + Contact Games

- Bat Speed Grand Prix: 16-17
- Shuffle Swing EV: 18-19
- Reverse HR Derby: 20-21
- Farthest Hit Ball Tourney: 22-23

Bat Speed + Contact + Barrel Control Games

- Around the World: 24-25
- Line to Line: 26-27
- Tour de Offset: 28-29
- Don't Hurt the Puppies: 30-31
- Launch Angle Ladder: 32-33
- The Gauntlet: 34-35

Approach

- Kill the King: 36-37
- Go/No Go: 38-39

Throwing and Pitching Game Notes: 40-41

Warm-Up Games

- Don't Spill the Soup: 42-43

Plyo Ball Games

- Plyo Darts: 44-45
- Partner Plyo Points: 46-47

Catch Play/Long Toss

- Head and Body Catch Play: 48-49
- Robin Hood: 50-51

Velocity Games

- Just Chuck It: 52-53
- Radar Gun World Series: 54-55
- Two Zones: 56-57
- Levels: 58-59

Bullpen Games

- Can't Get Hurt There: 60-61
- Horse: 62-63

Fielding Game Notes

- Golden Glove/
Last Man Standing: 66-67
- Around the World: 68-69
- Four Corners: 70-71
- "21 Shorthops": 72-73
- Grounder Grand Prix: 74-75
- Fill the Bucket: Infield: 76-77
- Fill the Bucket: Outfield: 78-79
- Fill the Bucket: Cutoffs: 80-81

All Team Games

- Lightning Round: Infield Only: 84-85
- Lightning Round: Outfield Only: 86-87
- Split the Field: 88-89
- Shorthand Cricket: 90-91
- Live At-bats: 92-93

Strength Game Notes

Medicine Ball Games

- Med Ball Relay Race: 96-97
- Med Ball Stone Load Relay: 98-99
- Medicine Ball Race: 100-101
- Med Ball Volleyball: 102-103
- Fence Toss: 104-105
- Taps: 106-107

Sprinting Games

- Don't Go Hungry: 108-109
- Chase the Rabbit: 110-111
- Tic-Tac-Toe Relay: 112-113
- Hurdle Hop Obstacle: 114-115
- Helicopter/Pool Noodle: 116-117





INTRODUCTION

On its surface, creating a practice plan seems pretty basic. Pick out the things that you want to work on, carve up the available time, then execute.

Simple right?
Yes, and no.

Effective youth baseball practices both engage the players in the activity and drive development of what are fairly complex movements, all within the constraint of a relatively short amount of time.

Teaching the necessary technical expertise and fundamental rules of the game while still having fun is no small task. To achieve this we want to maintain some kind of balance in our training between technical understanding and athletic skill development—which requires structure and consideration for how we create our practice plans.

Youth athletes are less coordinated than older athletes and often struggle to focus, which can make creating a fun and productive practice plan seem overwhelming. Further, hitting, pitching and fielding different positions all carry unique sets of expectations, roles and responsibilities, so the total number of skills and abilities that need to be developed are not small in number.

In a perfect world, we'd be able to develop competent athletes who have both the skills and the understanding to be functional baseball players. We do not need perfection, however. Players are going to make mistakes and it's our job as coaches to find times to push them beyond their comfort zone in practice. We can support and cheer them on when they succeed and help them learn from their mistakes when they fail.

Introduce success, then introduce a challenge.

This book aims to help you do both by identifying the key skills that will benefit players in the long run and developing games to train those skills.

Along the way please just make sure to keep it fun. Kids like fun. And fun is good. •



DEVELOP THE SKILLS THAT SCALE

The concept of developing Skills that Scale and its application in youth baseball relies on two fundamental and related ideas:

1. The skills you use more frequently are more important than the skills you use less frequently.
2. Putting a majority of our focus into the development of these skills will compound their value over time.

We call them Skills that Scale because they are the fundamental abilities that should help a player transition from the small 60' baseball field to the big 90' field. That transition is more daunting if players are not training in a way that prepares them for this massive change, because the big field demands significant skill and motor output.

We also want to consider the biological and psychological reality of working with young children. Youth players are simply not small adults—but on a baseball field they are often treated as such.

All too often our expectations of what children should be capable of understanding and executing, in addition to the emotional climate we create for them to perform in, are significantly out of step with anything that would be tolerated in their class-

room or other learning environment.

These out of step expectations can take the form of excessive pressure and consequences, but they can also be found in how we expect children to physically perform. One of the things that typically differentiates children from adults, and one child from another, is their levels of coordination and motor control, in addition to sheer strength and the ability to apply that strength within the context of a sport specific task.

Hitting a round ball with a round bat is difficult. So is throwing a ball from 46'+ feet away to a plate that is 17" wide.

It is not an exaggeration to say that baseball is one of, if not the most, difficult and complex sports that children participate in—and that's only considering the primary skill tasks, before you even get into the mechanics of actually playing the game.

Our response to this evaluation of the youth baseball landscape is to prioritize the development of the primary tools for success in the game—hitting and throwing—relative to their importance, which means making their development a primary training focus. Certainly it is true that there are other pathways to developing young players for future success, but based on a first-principles evaluation of what matters most for young players, we choose to fo-



cus primarily on the development of hitting and throwing, as these are simply the things that players do the most on a baseball field, now and later.

Having this focus does not mean that we ignore other aspects of player development or that we otherwise neglect teaching players the game of baseball. A best case scenario implementation of Skills that Scale does not treat baseball like a carnival game. Instead it simply means you allocate practice time to the things that will make the most impact on a player's ability to compete in the game today, tomorrow and all the days that follow.

Youth baseball should be fun, and fun is good, so our desire is for coaches who read this book to understand that in developing these Skills that Scale your players should have fun practices, doing the funnest things on a baseball field, which translates to fun in competition.

THE SKILLS THAT SCALE

At Driveline we orient our training around 'The Big 3' of both hitting and pitching.

These are:

The Big 3 of Hitting

- Bat speed—how fast you can swing the bat
- Contact quality—how often and good you are at making hard contact

- Swing decisions—how good you are at swinging at hitters' pitches.

The Big 3 of Pitching

- Stuff - how hard you throw and the movement of your pitches
- Command - your ability to throw the ball where you want
- Durability - how long and frequently can you perform

To keep things even simpler, we filter these down to what we call the Skills that Scale for youth players in both hitting and throwing.

Hitting

- Bat speed—how hard you can swing the bat
- Exit velocity—can you swing hard and make square contact to generate hard hit balls

Most of our training is oriented around bat speed and exit velocity for the following reasons: youth pitchers aren't good at throwing strikes and if you focus on 'building the engine' of bat speed and exit velocity, players will start to figure out what pitches they hit the hardest and which they don't, indirectly working on swing decisions.

Throwing

- Throwing velocity how hard you can throw
- Hitting a target (Command)—throwing the ball over the plate and throwing it to your teammate in the field

We believe that most youth players need to work on throwing harder to a target without worrying much about offspeed pitches.



Players should play multiple positions, so they don't get burnt out on the mound or pigeonholed in one position. The best youth players will showcase all four of these abilities. Hitters that swing fast and hit the ball square, resulting in a high exit velocity, will perform the best. Pitchers and fielders who can throw hard at a target will pitch the most and be put in defensive positions where they are more likely to make plays.

GAMIFICATION

We want to make practice and skill development more engaging by introducing rules, point systems and competition around the Skills that Scale. This enables coaches to create engaged and motivated athletes in practice.

We're going to take the Skills that Scale and create games with scoring systems so we can introduce competition amongst our players—not only with teammates but also with themselves over time.

PROGRESS OVER PERFECT + TEST & RETEST

This allows us to better engage hitters and pitchers and cut down on time in practice where youth athletes just go through the motions.

If we can turn important skills into

games, we can track results and measure progress over time. Trying to solve for 'perfect' for a whole team of players—at the recreational travel/select level—is likely out of reach. What we can solve for is progress over a specific period of time.

The key piece to understand is that trying to improve at baseball, or anything else in life, can never be put on cruise control.

A fundamental piece of Driveline's training is to track as much information as we can so that we can see how skills are developing. This applies to youth baseball because you can compare players' abilities over a longer time frame, and we can keep them engaged in the activity along the way as they see their progress improve.

While all of our games can just be played once, coaches can also 're-test' a player's skill development by replaying a game a few weeks after the first time to see how a skill has developed (or not).

If you're feeling overwhelmed with how to track these games, it's ok. Many of them can be played in practice without scoring as coaches and players get comfortable with them. This book isn't intended to create another set of jobs for coaches, but to figure out a way to keep kids engaged so they keep coming back. As kids play, they learn what skills get points. They then naturally want to know who 'won' the game, creating a more productive environment to score and track.

So, while we encourage coaches to try a variety of games in this book, feel free to use your team as feedback and bring back some of the



more engaging games a few weeks after introducing them. You'll be able to see progress that some athletes have made and/or reaffirm areas that still need to be improved.

We made this book to give coaches games that they could plug into any practice that they have.

If you wanted to use a game in every part of their practice, they are more than welcome.

On the other end, you may only choose to play one game a practice.

There is no right or wrong answer to how often you can play these games in practice.

Below are some guidelines for how you can structure a practice.

Every practice should start with a dynamic warm-up that should take 10 mins.

Then how you split players up depends on how many assistant coaches or parents you have to help out. Groups of four to six players generally work best, but if you can't group players into groups that small, it doesn't need to stop you from playing a game.

Hitting may rotate between stations of tee work, soft toss, and a game.

You may also run stations as a warm-up, splitting the team into 2-4 groups that rotate through drills in tee work and soft toss for 2-3 rounds before finishing the hitting part of practice.

Throwing work is going to be divided between bullpens and defense.

After a throwing specific warm-up, such as bands, athletes who have bullpens will move to bullpens. Athletes who don't need to throw a bullpen can go with a coach to play a defensive-focused game.

Throwing, defense, and hitting should take up the majority of the time at practice.

Strength games can be done in 15-20 mins at the end of practice to mix in a different competition.

A key piece is a set-up. Whatever can be set up before the game starts to put equipment in the correct place should be done.

It will take a few more minutes for all games to explain the rules and show all the players how to play the game.

For an hour and a half practice, it may work out to:

00:00 - 00:10 - dynamic warm-up

00:10 - 00:40 - throwing and defense

00:40 - 01:10 - hitting

01:10 - 1:30 - strength

For a two hour practice, it may work out to:

00:00 - 00:10 - dynamic warm-up

00:10 - 00:55 - throwing and defense

00:55 - 01:40 - hitting

01:40 - 02:00 - strength •





EXPLANATION OF THE GAME LAYOUT

All of our games are laid out in a similar format:

- **Skill Focus:** The Skill that Scales that we are focusing on with this game
- **Materials/Equipment:** Required and recommended equipment to perform the game
- **Playing Level:** Recommended playing level for the game
- **Time Commitment:** Estimated time to complete the game. This time will likely be longer the first time you introduce a game to your team or facility
- **Game Goals:** The goal of the game, related to how points are scored
- **Game Set up:** Any possible set up that coaches will need to do before the game can start
- **Game Description:** Description of the scoring system and rules for the games. Lays out everything you need to know to play the game with your team
- **Version 2/3:** Ways that the game can be scaled, or made more difficult, by modified equipment or rules.

HITTING GAMES

NOTES

Hitting Skills that Scale:

- Bat speed—how fast you can swing the bat
- Exit velocity—can you swing hard and make square contact

If you are playing a game focused just on bat speed, encourage athletes to be swinging as hard as they can. For the purpose of the drill, swing speed and swing effort should be emphasized over contact.

If you are playing a game focused on exit velocity, encourage athletes when they square the ball up. These drills will require athletes to both swing hard and hit the ball square. In our adult populations we find that the best batted ball outcomes come from bat speeds that are 90-95% of an athlete's max bat speed. Raising a player's 100% swings will also raise the bat speed of their 90-95% effort swings.

For games that are focused on bat speed and exit velocity, we recommend encouraging athletes to hit the ball up the middle and pull side. Being able to pull the ball in the air is a skill. There is a distinction in games between hitting a ball

in your zone as far and as hard as you can and being able to hit pitches in different areas of the zone to all parts of the field. We want to create time to work on both skills.

Recommended hitting tools:

- Axe Youth Weighted Bats
- Driveline Hitting Plyos & Mini-Hitting Plyos
- Cones or flags for benchmarks

Note: Hitting and mini-hitting plyos are soft sandfill balls for athletes to hit. They give instant feedback on the quality of contact and do not travel as far as baseballs, making them a great practice and pre-game hitting tool.

A hitting plyo that is squared up will travel in the direction of the bat path, but a plyo that isn't squared up will spin and not travel very far. We'd recommend mini-hitting plyos for ages 8-13, while athletes over 14 can use both mini-hitting plyos and hitting plyos.

Bat speed recommendations:

- Blast Motion, Diamond Kinetics, Swing Speed Radar

Cage recommendations:

For indoor cages, items such as HitTrax or a hitting Rapsodo are certainly helpful. Coaches may use string to mark launch angle or other targets. Hitting Rapsodos may also be used outside.

Note: Launch angle strings are colored strings placed in the net of a cage to give athletes and coaches feedback on the angle to which the ball is hit off the bat. They are not as accurate as technology but can give appropriate feedback.

We'd recommend putting a string at 0 degrees, 15 degrees and 30 degrees in a cage, or 0 degrees, 10 degrees, 20 degrees, and 30 degrees.

Ways to scale difficulty in batting practice:

While we prefer hitting plyos for warm-ups, coaches may use baseballs or other tools.

From easiest to hardest for youth players we can rank:

- Tee
- Underhand flips
- Overhand flips
- BP

- 'Shortbox' - throwing from flat ground 5-6 feet in front of the mound
- Live at-bats - player or machine throwing from pitching mound distance

Coaches may also set up L-screens, or other batting practice screens, at slight angles to work on pitches from a right handed or left handed perspective. These screens only need to be moved 4-6 inches to the right or left (from the very center of the plate) to re-create an angle.



Approach:

Coaches may use hitting plyos to work on approach as well. Since they are different colors you can designate 'takes' or 'swings' based on the color of the ball.

Examples may be:

- Dark Blue: Take
- Medium Blue: Oppo
- Light Blue: Pull
- White/Mini: Hit hard to any field
- Blue: Inside, Pull
- Blue: Outside, take
- Purple: Outside, hit oppo
- Purple: Inside, take •

BAT SPEED GRAND PRIX

This game focuses on each hitter's engine—how good are they at rotating and producing bat speed?

Skill Focus:

- Bat Speed

Materials / Equipment:

- Bats
- Baseballs
- Bat sensor

Playing Level:

- 8 years and up

Time Commitment:

- 10+ minutes

Game Scoring

- Highest point total wins, 1 point for getting over baseline bat speed

Note: A baseline reading is a part of practice where you are aiming to collect information on the starting point of an athlete's skill. In this case getting a baseline bat speed would mean using a swing speed or bat sensor to collect X number of swings. The average of those swings would be a player's baseline.

Technology Needed:

Something to measure bat speed, such as a Blast Motion, Diamond

Kinetics sensor or Swing Speed Radar and a phone or iPad that connects to the sensor

Game Description:

A coach will need to monitor the bat speed of an athlete, using either a phone or an iPad. They can stand outside the cage or hitting area. Players will take a round of 6 for batting practice. The coach may tell the player verbally if they are 'over' or 'under' their baseline bat speed.

Throughout the player's training, the coach will want to monitor this number and adjust it accordingly to give them an updated goal to shoot for.

This game works best as a 'test and retest' activity spaced multiple weeks apart. For consistent measurements, we would suggest keeping the same type of feed (front toss, soft toss) to the athlete. This holds true when playing this game over one practice and/or over multiple practices. For example, if you did soft toss the first round, do soft toss the second round.

A coach can stand just outside of the cage to get bat speed measurements. For older athletes, you may track each other's bat speed. Remember we want to focus on bat speed here, so encourage athletes to swing as hard as they

BAT SPEED + CONTACT GAMES



can! Exploration with different moves to rotate faster is a key part of this game. Players won't feel comfortable moving fast unless they're encouraged to!

The most relevant bat speed measurements will come from close to a game environment. Coaches will need to take into consideration the talent of their hitters and what method will work best for them.

Coaches may also discover that as the environment becomes more challenging, or game-like, bat speeds tend to decrease. The highest bat speeds will likely be seen off a tee, but players may change their swing on a tee in a way that wouldn't work in a game. Our oldest athletes get bat speed measurement off a machine or pitcher. Younger athletes may use soft toss or front flips as a better measure for bat speed. ●

SHUFFLE SWING EV

Here we are encouraging hitters to move faster by adding in a shuffle step to a swing. This enables kids to be more athletic and to push the boundaries of how hard they can swing.

Skill Focus:

- Bat Speed

Materials / Equipment:

- Game bats
- Baseballs
- Radar gun
- HitTrax

Playing Level:

- 8 years and up

Time Commitment:

- 15+ minutes

Game Scoring

- First time playing, the athlete with the highest exit velocity wins. After playing multiple times, we recommend the winner be the player with the biggest increase.

Game Description:

Set up a radar gun behind the cage, located behind where the catcher would be, facing straight to where the coach is throwing.

For the first time playing this game, each player should try to hit the ball square up the middle as hard as they can. If using a radar gun, we recommend only counting balls that go back up the middle.

Radar guns are most accurate when they are measuring baseballs that are directly in their path. When balls are hit at an angle you risk the chance of a misread. Easiest setup is to have the radar gun standing with the coach front tossing, behind the net, and direct athletes to hit the ball at the gun. Or directly behind home plate and direct them to hit the ball right up the middle.

If you are playing this game anytime after the first time, the players' goal should be to beat the number they had before.

As the year progresses, you should be able to adjust their baseline number if you are tracking EVs each time you play the game.

We recommend rounds of 6 swings before rotating players. •

If you have a HitTrax or Hitting Rapsodo, you can work this drill in with normal BP using the Shuffle Swing drill.



If you have a HitTrax or Hitting Rapsodo, you can work this drill in with normal BP using the Shuffle Swing drill.



Athletes may start two to three steps behind home plate before shuffling up to the plate. Coaches can use a tee for the youngest athletes who may have difficulty making contact with the shuffle swing.

REVERSE HR DERBY

Hitting a home run is hard but extremely fun. This game scales down what counts as a home run so hitters are encouraged to hit the ball hard in the air and are able to see some success.

Skill Focus:

- Bat Speed

Materials / Equipment:

- Field
- Baseballs

Adjustments:

Can be played with hitting plyos as an added challenge if you have minimum space or no fence.

We would recommend mini-hitting plyos for athletes ages 8-13 and both regular and mini-hitting plyos for ages 14+.

Can add in an element of approach by designating certain hitting plyo colors as 'swings' or 'takes'.

Playing Level:

- 8 years and up

Time Commitment:

- 20 + minutes

Game Scoring

- Highest point total wins

Game Description:

Players rotate through, trying to hit a home run. Keep rounds short—six swings/hits. Players rotate after 6 swings.

Have one player hitting, 2-3 'on-deck' and the rest fielding.

A 'home run' that goes over the fence or beyond a set of cones gives a player 1 point.

**Game Description for a Field:
Field with a Fence**

Pick a spot in the outfield to move home plate to; aim to set up home plate at a distance where most players will be able to hit it over the fence.

Future rounds can be made more difficult by moving home plate back.

Field without a Fence

Players hit from home plate. If players are younger, bring cones to the field and lay them out behind the mound across the infield. If a player hits a hitting plyo over the cones, it counts as a 'home run' and a point.

For older players, the cones can be moved back to the baseline; you may also use the the end of the infield (where the dirt ends and outfield grass begins) as the 'fence' to mark a home run.

If your field has a fence, use that to mark home runs. If your field doesn't have a fence, you can use a cone line to mark out where the fence would be. If you're in a limited outdoor space, use cones outdoors and use hitting plyos.

Game Description with No Tech at a Facility

If you are using a batting cage, you'll want to set up your cage so the home runs are as objective (i.e.

clear to all observers) as possible. Coaches may use strings placed around the net to mark specific 'launch angles'. While this measure isn't exact, it is a low-tech way to get an external goal into the cage.

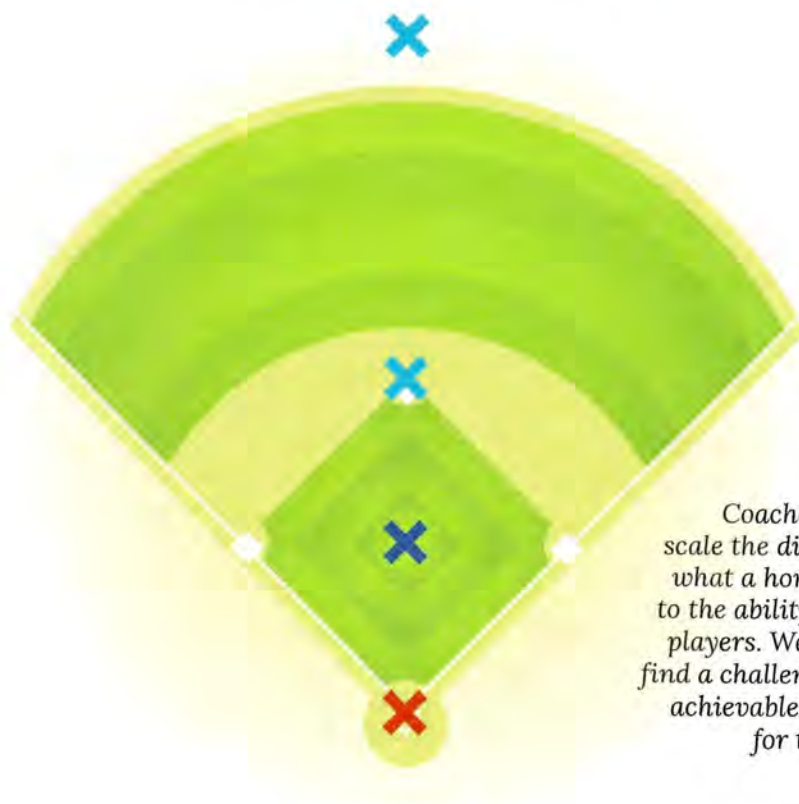
Version 2:

Have an 'easy round' by only using the lightest two hitting plyos.

Have a 'challenge round' by only using the heavier two hitting plyos.

Version 3:

Have the heavier of the two hitting plyos be worth 2 points and the lighter two hitting plyos be worth 1 point. ●



Coaches should scale the distance of what a home run is to the ability of their players. We want to find a challenging but achievable distance for the team.

FARTHEST HIT BALL TOURNEY

Encouraging athletes to hit the ball hard in the air. Hitters will have fun competing and running around the field trying to see whose ball was hit the furthest.

Skill Focus:

- Bat Speed

Materials / Equipment:

- Baseballs
- Game bat
- Tape measure
- Cones/flags
- Hitting Rapsodo inside or outside
- HitTrax if inside

Playing Level:

- 8 years and up

Time Commitment:

- 20 + minutes

Game Scoring

- The farthest ball hit wins

Game Description, Outside:

This game can be set up similar to BP. You will need players in the field to mark baseballs that have

gone the furthest. We recommend using a specific mark for baseballs, either a helmet, batting glove, or cone with tape and a player's name on it. After the round, the player will go to the field and 'mark' their farthest hit ball. We'd recommend marking approximately where the ball landed.

Game Description, Inside with Tech:

If you have technology, you can use this game when inside in a hitting cage. Simply keep track of the farthest ball hit per player each round.

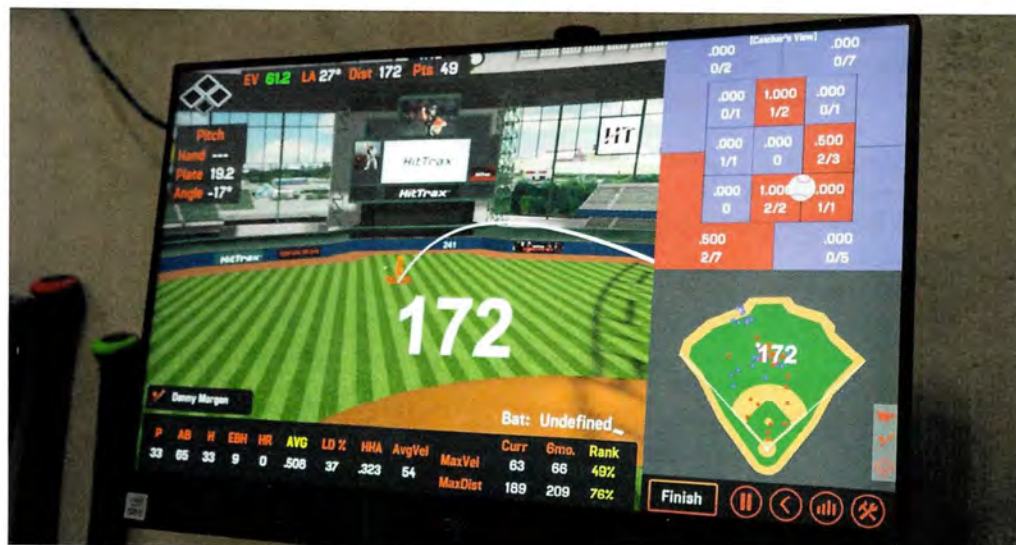
If you have time, you can also set up a bracket for athletes to challenge one another; simply pair hitters against one another. The one who hits the ball the furthest in that round advances in the winners bracket. The other hitter gets moved to the losers bracket.

Version 2:

Same rules as before only you can break up rounds into furthest pulled ball, furthest to center, furthest opposite field. ●



If you're outside, be creative! Coaches should play for multiple rounds. Teammates in the field keep track of the farthest hit ball. Once the hitters finish, they grab an item such as a cone or a flag and run out to plant it where the ball landed. In the next round, they try to beat that distance.



AROUND THE WORLD

Here we are working on hitting balls to different parts of the field while adding in the challenge of using different kinds of baseball bats.

Skill Focus:

- Barrel Control

Playing Level:

- Ages 8 and up

Time Commitment:

- 10+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- Highest point total wins

Materials / Equipment:

- Baseball bat
- Weighted/training bats (Axe bats)
- Baseballs
- Hitting plyos

Game Description:

Pull the practice and game bats you are using either inside the batting cage or next to the hitter if

you are on the field.

Place hitters into groups; 3-4 hitters will be at the plate going through rounds of the game.

Each round will use a different bat as players try to hit balls to different parts of the field.

Cycle A: Heavy Bat - 1st round pull side, 2nd round middle up, 3rd round oppo side

Cycle B: Lightest Bat - 1st round oppo side, 2nd round middle up, 3rd round pull side

Cycle C: Game Bat - 10 swings per player. 1 point per hard hit ball.

If limited for time, the cycles may look like:

Cycle A: Heavy Bat - 3 pull side, 3 up the middle, 3 opposite field

Cycle B: Lightest Bat - 3 opposite field, 3 up the middle, 3 pull side

Cycle C: Game Bat - 10 swings per player. 1 point per hard hit ball ●

BAT SPEED + CONTACT + BARREL CONTROL GAMES



Be creative with the bats that you use. A younger or older sibling's bat, a softball bat, a whiffle ball bat filled with sand. Use this game as an opportunity to test your player's limits with the kinds of bats that they can use to hit.

In this game, we are not so concerned about the location of the ball. Hitters are going to be in situations where they will pull baseballs that are inside, middle or outside. They will also be in situations where they hit balls the opposite field that are inside, middle or outside. Here you can focus less on the location of the pitch and more on the ability to hit balls in different locations to different parts of the field.

LINE TO LINE

Working on hitting the ball to different parts of the field while adding in baseballs from slightly different angles to represent right and left handed pitchers.

Skill Focus:

- Barrel Control, Swing Decisions

Materials / Equipment:

- Baseballs
- Game bat

Playing Level:

- 13 years and up

Time Commitment:

- 15 + minutes

Game Scoring

- Highest point total wins

Game Description

Set up an 'L' screen slightly off center to one side, aiming to simulate an angle from a righty or a lefty. If you have two screens and two coaches, you can put the screens next to one another and have coaches rotate their throws.

Easiest version is underhand toss, medium difficulty is overhand flips, hard difficulty is BP.

Next is a drill option for working on variability, where we are feeding them balls.

Coach will throw/toss the ball to the outside/middle/inside part of the plate; the hitter's goal is to hit the ball to certain sides of the field. Players get 1 point for each ball hit to the designated part of the field. Coaches can throw the balls in the following order:

- 2 balls outside corner, hit opposite field
- 2 balls middle, hit up the middle
- 2 balls inside, hit pull side

Level 2

Coaches can call out the location that is being thrown to; the player will have to hit to that location.

- Coach: "Middle" - Player should hit up the middle
- Coach: "Outside" - Player should hit opposite field
- Coach: "Middle" - Player should hit up the middle
- Coach: "Inside" - Player should pull the ball
- Coach: "Outside" - Player should hit opposite field
- Coach: "Inside" - Player should pull the ball



Aligned to the left



Aligned in the center



Aligned to the right

L screen only needs to move two to four inches one way or another to simulate a right versus left-handed pitcher.

Level 3

Don't tell the player where the ball is going, but still expect the ball to be hit to the respective area of the field.

Similar to Around the World, we want our hitters to hit different kinds of pitches to different parts of the field. It is simpler to give athletes the directions given in that game, i.e. inside pitches should be pulled, pitches in the middle should be hit up the middle

and outside pitches should be hit the other way. But we shouldn't emphasize that to the point that athletes feel they did something wrong if they hit a ball down the middle to the opposite field or if they pull a ball on the outside corner. Same goes for coaches throwing BP or soft toss. Aim for a certain part of the plate, but don't punish yourself or the players if they hit a ball that isn't exactly where you want it. ●

TOUR DE OFFSET

Using one of our foundational hitting drills to practice posture, we're focusing on hitting the ball hard to different parts of the field.

Skill Focus:

- Barrel Control

Materials / Equipment:

- Bat
- Baseballs

Adjustments:

- Can use hitting plyos instead of baseballs

Playing Level:

- 11 years and up

Time Commitment:

- 20 + minutes

Game Scoring

- Highest point total wins

Drills Used:

- Offset open and offset closed

Offset open: Have the hitter angle their feet so they are 30 de-

grees 'open'; a right-handed batter will aim towards the shortstop and a lefty will open their feet 30 degrees towards second base.

Offset closed: Have the hitter angle their feet so they are closed 30 degrees; a right-handed batter will aim their feet towards second base and a lefty will aim their feet towards the shortstop.

The goal is to hit the ball hard through a variety of postures.

Game Description:

8 swings a round

Round 1: Offset Open Stance
Hard Hit Balls - 1pt
Anything Else - 0pts

Round 2: Offset Closed Stance
Hard Hit Balls - 1pt
Anything Else - 0pts

Round 3: Normal Stance
Hard Hit Balls - 2pts
Anything Else - Minus 1pt •



An example of offset closed



An example of offset open

DON'T HURT THE PUPPIES

A fun game that engages a hitter's imagination in order to hit the ball hard in the air.

Skill Focus:

- Barrel Control and Bat Speed

Materials / Equipment:

- Bat
- Baseballs

Playing Level:

- 8 years and up

Time Commitment:

- 15 + minutes

Game Scoring

- Highest point total wins

Game Set Up:

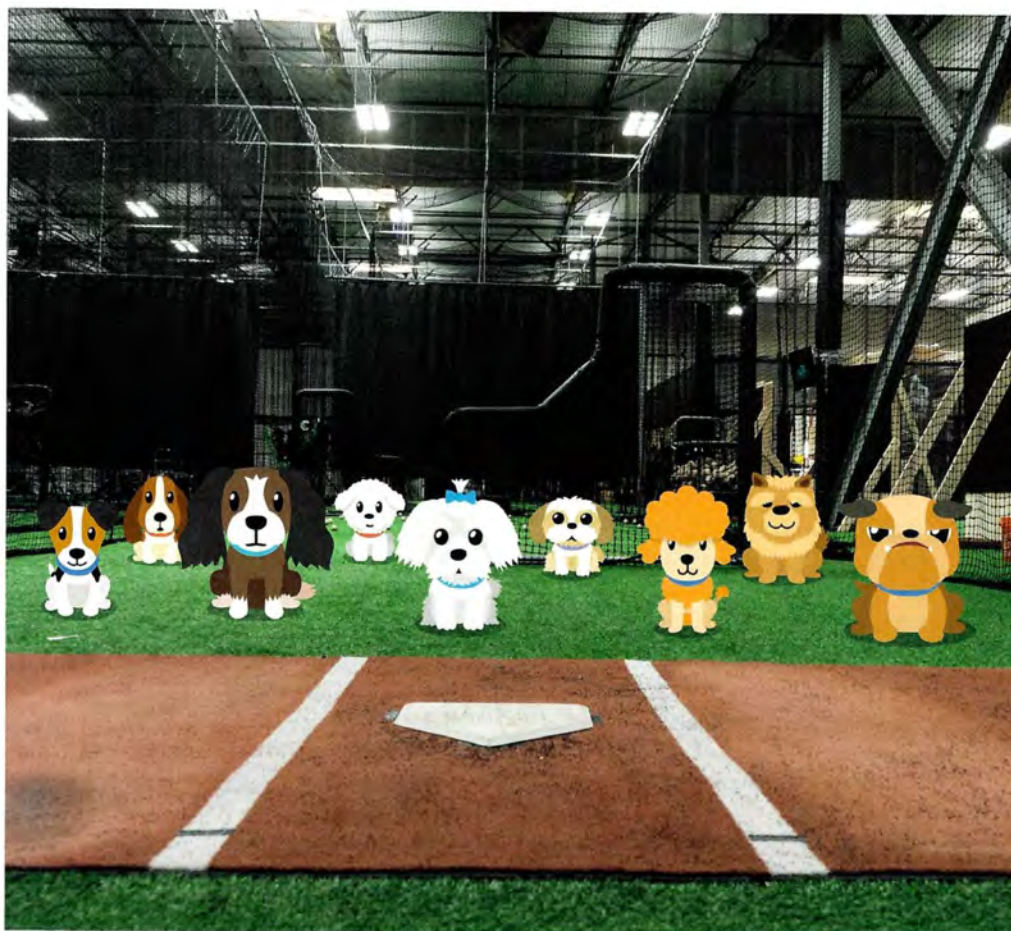
You can play on a field or any open space with cones to designate the infield area. If you're indoors hitting into a net, just designate a line on the net a little bit above the player's waistline when they're swinging.

Game Description:

The player gets a point for each ball they hit in the air. Most points at the end of the game wins.

Version 2:

Take batting practice with the same rules but rotate through different types of bats—speed trainers, long bat, short bat, etc. ●



This game is simple and straightforward. You'll want kids to use their imagination to get engaged.

LAUNCH ANGLE LADDER

Working on awareness of what swings produce different kinds of line drives and fly balls.

Skill Focus:

- Barrel Control and Bat Speed

Materials / Equipment:

- A player's game bat
- Baseballs
- A HitTrax or Hitting Rapsodo

You can use launch angle strings or other markers in the cage to determine launch angle as well.

Playing Level:

- 11 years and up

Time Commitment:

- 15 + minutes

Game Scoring

- Highest point total wins

Game Description:

Break up players into groups for hitting stations and BP. Players will be taking rounds of 6 swings.

Each round has a specific launch

angle (or a target in the cage) that they are aiming for.

Examples may be 0 degrees, 10 degrees, 20 degrees, and 30 degrees.

If no technology is available, it would be easier to break into 0 degrees (back of the cage), 15 degrees (top of the back of the cage), and 30 degrees (top of the cage). Can also use markers such as: top of the L screen, corner of the cage, or 'corner of the cage behind me' (from the perspective of the coach).

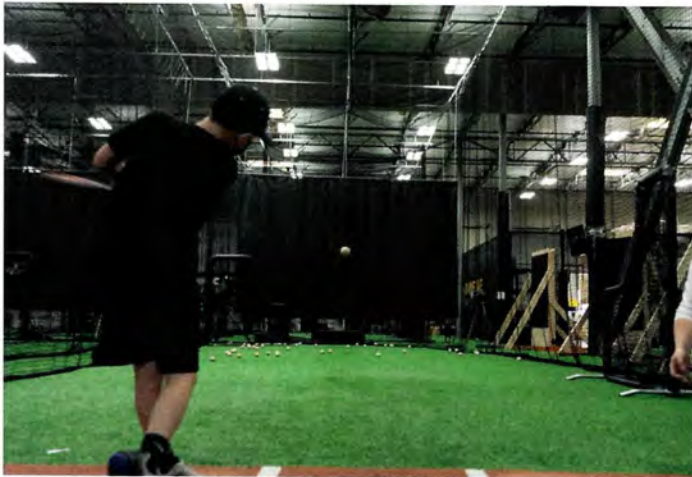
Each time they hit that specific range/target, they get a point.

The player with the most points at the end of the rounds wins. We recommend that you track which angles they are successful at to help adjust the players' training in the future.

For players that struggle with this game, you can also adjust the scoring on a per player basis. Players who struggle to hit the top of the back or top of the cage with authority could have their scoring area adjusted to be points for that area. ●



*Example
of a low
line drive*



*Example of
a medium
height line
drive*



*Example
of a high
line drive
or fly ball*

THE GAUNTLET

A challenging game that tests a player's ability to hit the ball hard with a variety of different bats.

Skill Focus:

- Barrel Control and Bat Speed

Materials / Equipment:

- Variety of bats, including weighted bats, game bats, different-sized teammates' bats
- Baseballs or hitting plyos

Playing Level:

- 11 years and up

Time Commitment:

- 20 + minutes

Game Scoring

- Highest point total wins; hit the ball hard with as many bats as possible

Game Set Up:

You'll want to collect as many different bats as possible, such as game bats, Axe Overload Handle & Barrel, teammate bats of different sizes, older bats that are lighter and shorter, bats that may be

longer and heavier than what they use.

Next you'll want to establish the 'order' or 'lineup' of the bats that the players will swing.

Game Description:

This game will be one of the hitting stations that you use in practice.

Divide players up into groups. Explain to the players that they will be taking 3-5 swings (or more, up to the coach) with one bat before picking up another bat for 3-5 swings.

You'll want to find somewhere between 5-8 different bats. For any given player on your team, this bat lineup could look something like:

Example Lineup 1

Game Bat (29")
Axe Overload Bat - Handle Loaded
Axe Overload Bat - Barrel Loaded
Teammate Bat (A) (30")
Teammate Bat (B) (31")
Short Bat
Long Bat
Wiffle Ball Bat



Use as many different bats as you can find. Different teammates bats, older or younger sibling bats are great to use in this game

Example Lineup 2

Game Bat
Axe Overload B
Axe Overload H
Long Bat
Teammate Bat
Short Bat
Teammate Bat
Wiffle Ball Bat

Example Lineup 3

Game Bat

Teammate Bat A
Axe Overload B
Wiffle Ball Bat
Axe Overload H
Short Bat
Long Bat
Teammate Bat B

As players go through each round, count the number of hard hit balls in the air. Each hard hit ball in the air is one point. ●

KILL THE KING

Engaging a player's awareness of the count they are hitting in and their approach to those counts.

Skill Focus:

- Barrel Control + Bat Speed

Materials / Equipment:

- Bat
- Baseballs

Playing Level:

- 8 years and up

Time Commitment:

- 10 + minutes

Game Scoring

- Highest point total wins

Game description:

This game trains approach by giving hitters specific counts they need to hit in, along with quality contact by assigning points for specific hits. As hitters go through rounds, coaches will assign points to hard hit balls. Below is an example scoring system.

Note: Subtracting points does add

another level of competition to the game, but we would only suggest doing so if you have someone dedicated to tracking points. Depending on their age and maturity, athletes may also be given this role.

Rounds:

Round 1: Player starts with a 2-2 count

Hard Hit Balls: 2pts

Anything Else: 0pts

Coaches will then need to split the team into smaller groups and set a point total that the winning team needs to reach. We would suggest 20 points.

Players on each team should switch off hitting, so Team 1 Player 1 hits, then Team 2 Player 1, then Team 1 Player 2, etc. Adding in a count also restricts the number of chances a player gets, so you aren't throwing a set number of pitches per round. Each player steps in and should get points in 1-2 swings (2 swings if they take a ball).

Once players each hit one time,

APPROACH



that finishes 'Round 1'. In the second round, we would add in negative points.

Such as:

Round 2: Player starts with a 2-1 count

Hard Hit Balls To The Outfield: 3pts

Ground Balls: Minus 1pt

In the third and final round of Kill The King, we really emphasize a more game-like environment.

Round 3: Player starts with a 3-2 count

Hard Hit Ball: 4 pts

Soft Contact or Pop-Ups: Minus 2 pts ●

GO/NO GO

A game focused on strike zone awareness. Its principles can be applied to other games as well.

Skill Focus:

- Approach

Materials / Equipment:

- Bat
- Baseballs
- Home plate
- Mini-plyos

Playing Level:

- 13 years and up

Time Commitment:

- 10 + minutes

Game Scoring

- Highest point total wins

Game Description:

We recommend starting these rounds with front toss and progressing to normal coach-thrown batting practice. This progression can occur during a practice or over multiple practices. Moving from front toss to batting practice

depends on the coach's ability to hit a target and the players' age and experience.

Players will receive two points for taking a pitch/feed that is out of the strike zone, coaches discretion. We recommend cueing players to swing with high intent when they do swing.

Go/No Go Point System and Rounds:

6 pitches per round. Randomize 50% balls at each location in each round

2pts for each ball taken

Round 1: High Strikes

Round 2: Low Strikes

Round 3: Outside Strikes

Round 4: Inside Strikes

Version 2:

Expand the go/no go to sides of the plate.

Round 1: Only swing at balls you can pull in the air, take others

Round 2: Only swing at balls you can hit the other way, take others

Round 3: Only swing at balls



you can hit up the middle, take others

Round 4: Only swing at balls you can hit for doubles/home runs Rather than only giving points for takes, you can award a point for a take and a point for a ball hit in a certain location.

Version 3:

If using hitting plyos, you can dictate whether a player takes or swings based on the color of the ball.

Version 4:

If you are using hitting plyos, you can dictate whether a player takes or where they hit the ball based on the color of the ball.

Approach is one of the more difficult skills to teach, so we should not expect youth players to have

MLB-level approaches, especially considering the skill level of youth pitchers and umpires. We would recommend making the balls in this game very not competitive. We would not be overly hard on kids who have difficulty judging a ball that is a few inches outside. Approach is an important skill to learn, but players need to work on their swing as well, so we want kids to swing at practice. That is why we consider this game to be more advanced than other games in this book.

Another way to work on approach in a non-game fashion is to have hitters stand in during their teammates' bullpens. They don't swing but instead wait until the ball hits the mitt and then call out a 'ball' or a 'strike'. ●

THROWING AND PITCHING GAME NOTES

Throwing strikes is hard—so hard that oftentimes players will intentionally exclude themselves from the activity entirely. Both, “Coach I’m just not a pitcher” and, “Coach I don’t want to pitch” likely have their roots in a simple truth—a player is scared to pitch because they do not feel prepared to perform.

Since we know that being able to pitch, which generally means throwing the ball hard in or around the strike zone, the question becomes how do we give those other kids a gentle nudge to try pitching before they decide that they can’t do it? As with all of the other drills in this book, our strategy is to introduce success and then introduce a challenge.

Driveline believes in this philosophy that every youth pitcher should practice pitching and pitch in games. There is no reason to pigeonhole athletes into certain positions at a young age, as it can be detrimental to their desire to keep playing baseball if they are pigeonholed early on. *We don’t want youth defensive specialists. We want well rounded athletes who can throw, hit and play competently anywhere on the field.*

For an introduction to Driveline’s youth throwing series, we

recommend Driveline’s Youth Baseball Development certification or Driveline Plus. For the sake of this book, the Skills that Scale in pitching are:

- **Throwing velocity**
- **Hitting a target**

Players need to make sure that they properly warm up before throwing, and we encourage all athletes to warm up to throw, not throw to warm up.

We utilize bands, wrist weights and plyo balls in our throwing specific warm-up, which occurs after a dynamic warm-up.

If you are playing a game focused just on throwing velocity, encourage athletes who are throwing as hard as they can. For the purpose of the drill, effort and throwing velocity should be emphasized over location. These games should also only be played after approximately 3 weeks of regular practices.

Throwing and Pitching Workload

Workload defined for youth coaches and players:

- How much are our athletes prepared to throw, or hit, on a given day?
- How much have they thrown, or

hit, in the previous days or weeks to prepare for the day?

We fully support Pitch Smart's pitch count guidelines. Yet there is still the need to get players from starting their season when they have had time off to being able to throw multiple innings in games.

Athletes should be throwing 2-3x a week for three to four weeks before they attempt to throw at 100% effort. This is called on-ramping—taking time to increase throwing volume before increasing throwing intensity. ***We would not introduce a radar gun, or velocity based game, for the first 2-3 weeks of practice.***

If you are playing a game focused on hitting a target, encourage athletes to throw hard and hit a target. These drills will require athletes to both throw hard and hit a target. Not every throw will be at 100% effort, but we want to encourage athletes to throw hard to a target.

Recommended throwing tools:

- Driveline Youth Plyos
- A plyo wall, wall or fence with a mat on it.
- Warm-up bands (such as Jaeger bands)

Plyo balls are an effective warm-up tool for youth athletes. We use

them in the gym every day that athletes throw. There are also bonuses to having athletes work on their mechanics with plyo balls and a wall because there isn't the fear of embarrassment of overthrowing a catch partner.

You may also substitute a baseball and a target for the games that involve throwing at a plyo wall. You may also substitute a plyo ball for a baseball and a plyo wall for another target, such as a net, when playing a game that involves both.

Throwing velocity recommendations:

Pocket Radars are accurate and cost effective. There are also options such as DK or Pitch Logic balls, but spin rate metrics aren't necessary for youth players.

Ways to scale difficulty in throwing drills:

Coaches can adjust how far the athlete is to the target. Further away is more difficult and closer to the target will be easier.

You could also change the size of the target that an athlete is aiming for. Understand that youth athletes are less coordinated than adult athletes, so it is acceptable for their targets to be relatively large compared to targets for high school or older athletes. ●

DON'T SPILL THE SOUP

Skill Focus:

- Properly performing the J-Band warmup circuit

Materials / Equipment:

- J-Bands for each set of kids and a place to connect the J-Bands.

Playing Level:

- 8 years and up

Time Commitment:

- Under 5 minutes

Game Goals:

- The goal of the game is to have the lowest number of points at the end of your J-Band circuit.

Game Scoring

- Highest point total wins

Game Description:

Pair up each player so that one is doing a band warm-up and the other is observing. The player who is watching gets to be the scorekeeper for the player performing the band exercises. The scorekeeper can voice any faults they see and assign 1 point per technical drill failure.

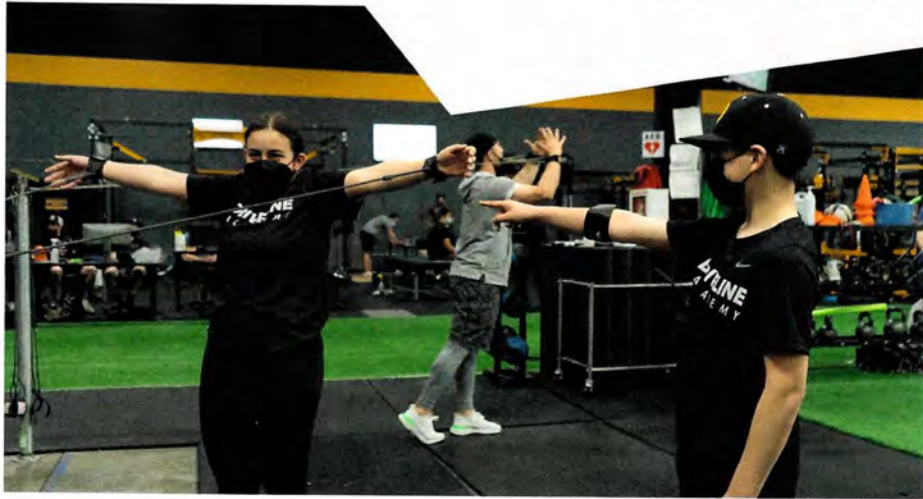
Common faults would include:

- Leaning their upper body too far forward or too far backwards
- Pushing their head forward
- Shrugging their shoulders up towards their ears
- Walking too far away from the bands and not reaching full range-of-motion

So, each time a player performing the drill “spills the soup”, they’re given a point. The idea is to get through the warm up with the lowest number of points assigned as possible.

This game should help keep the youngest players engaged while waiting for shared equipment. We’ve found it helpful for coaches to have players count out loud, as a team, either the reps or the number of seconds per movement to keep them engaged. If you would like to count out loud and have a player track faults, we would recommend the players keep track using their fingers. ●

WARM-UP GAMES



Coaches may also expand this to different exercises in their warm-up if they do not do bands. It is an easy way to keep kids engaged if you are working on a new warm-up or have a big team for the number of coaches you have. The observers can be 'assistant coaches' trying to help their teammates.



PLYO DARTS

Skill Focus:

- Hitting a target

Playing Level:

- 8 years and up

Materials / Equipment:

- Plyo ball (tennis balls or baseballs into a net can also be used)

A plyo wall or smooth flat surface to throw against, can also use a yoga mat or other mat attached to a chain link fence

Chalk or tape such as duct or gorilla tape, thick colored string if using a net

Time Commitment:

- 5+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- The goal of the game is to add an accuracy component to our plyo throwing drills.

Game Description:

Before athletes are throwing on your plyo wall or mat, use chalk or tape to draw a circle for targets on the wall. Rule of thumb is the target should be over the throwing shoulder of the athlete.

Each player is paired up at one

station. Player 1 throws and receives a point if the ball is thrown inside the circle. Player 2 steps up and throws and receives a point if the ball is thrown inside the circle. If the ball is outside the circle, no points are awarded.

Level 2:

Targets can become smaller over time to increase the difficulty; targets may also change depending on the day or practice.

Level 3:

You may also draw a series of targets of different shapes on the wall. A coach can call out a specific shape or color, and if the athlete hits that shape or color, they get a point.

The idea is to make progressively smaller targets while players execute a series of PlyoCare ball throws in an attempt to hit them.

- Big Target - 1 point
- Medium Target - 2 points
- Bullseye Target - 4 points

Level 4:

Introduce a moving target to the game such as a frisbee. Have a coach stand 2-3 feet to the side of

PLYO BALL GAMES



Coaches and parents may use chalk or tape to create a target. If an athlete faces the wall, the target should be to their throwing arm side, not directly in front of them, and just above shoulder height.

the target on the plyo wall. They then throw the frisbee in the air and the athlete needs to try to hit the frisbee near the target height before it hits the ground.

Coaches can be creative with the

targets. Circles, boxes, triangles all work to mix up the focus from one practice to another. Keep in mind that kids will have a tough time with small targets. Use your best judgment to create appropriately sized targets. ●

PARTNER PLYO POINTS

Skill Focus:

- Hitting a target

Playing Level:

- 8 years and up

Materials / Equipment:

- A place to throw plyo balls at a target
- Sets of plyo balls
- Chalk or tape

Time Commitment:

- 15+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- Highest point total wins

Game Description:

For this game you will want to partner your players with another player who is doing the same plyo throws at a similar effort level. We would suggest pairing players of similar height.

You'll want the players to switch off each throw. Each throw in the

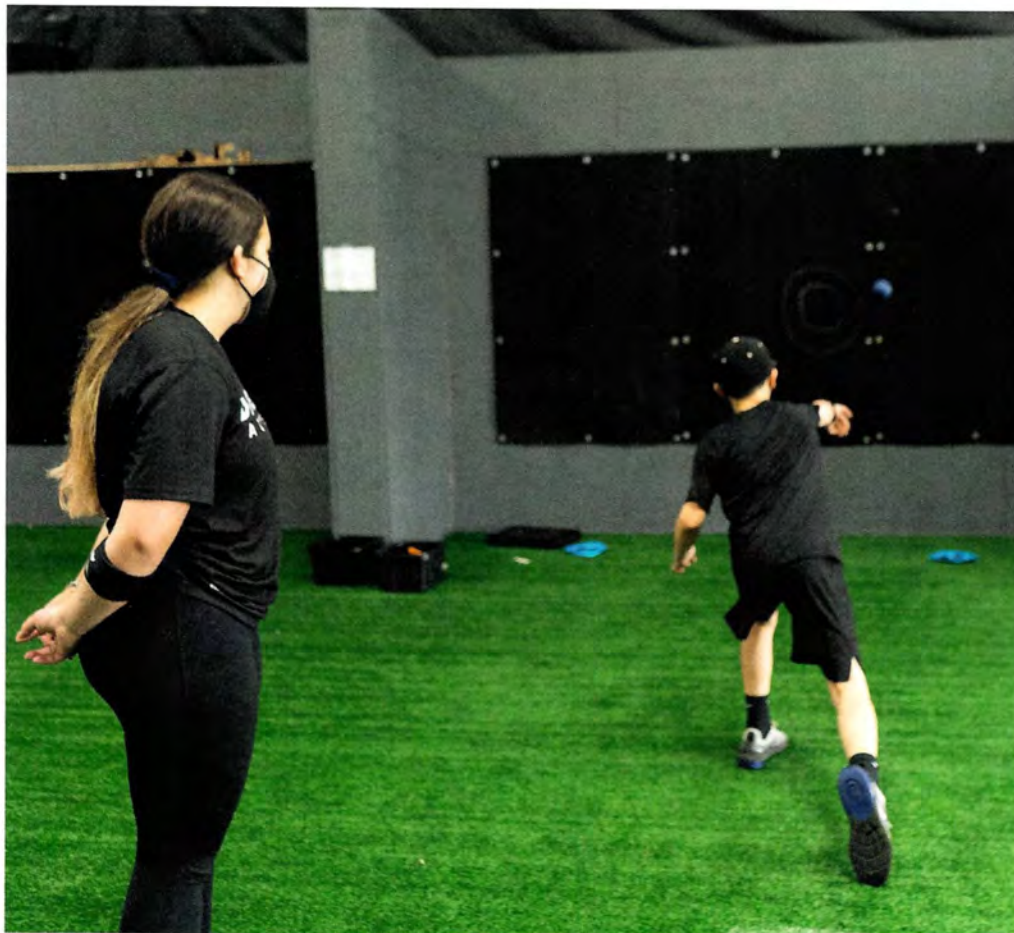
circle gets a point. If you don't hit the circle, you don't get a point.

We recommend this game be played with space; athletes can stand up to 10 feet away from the plyo wall. Targets should also be set between the athlete's head and shoulder; if the target is directly in front of them, they will be throwing too far across their body.

Version 2:

Create a larger circle, then a smaller circle inside that one. If a player gets inside the large circle they get a point, and if they get the ball inside the smaller circle they get two points.

This game can be played, or right after, a plyo warm-up. Athletes can play it throughout their warm-up, which is an easy way to stay engaged if you need to share throwing space. Or you can have athletes throw after their warm-up, by telling athletes they have



a certain number of throws with a specific ball. We would recommend picking an odd number so

there are no ties.

This game can also be played with a tennis ball and a target on a wall. ●

HEAD AND BODY CATCH PLAY

Skill Focus:

- Hitting a target

Playing Level:

- 8 years and up (might need to be older for accuracy)

Materials / Equipment:

- Glove
- A baseball
- An open space to play catch

Time Commitment:

- 20+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- Throw accurately to your partner, hitting them in the head or chest. Most points wins.

Game Description:

Players should partner up for catch play.

When they are playing catch, the

players receive:

- 1 point for ball to the chest
- 2 points for a ball to the shoulder / head

At the end of the catch play, the player with the highest number of points wins. As the coach, you will want to watch out for younger players throwing darts or pushing the ball instead of throwing the ball towards their partners as normal.

This game may also be done at the end of catch play/long toss. So, players move back in distance (long toss), and when they come closer to one another, you set a distance at which they need to stay for a certain number of throws. They can calculate the points they receive for 10-15 throws. ●

CATCH PLAY/ LONG TOSS



Throws that hit the glove at chest or head height will be worth a point.



Throws not at chest or head height would be worth zero points.

ROBIN HOOD

Skill Focus:

- Hitting a target

Playing Level:

- Ages 8 and up, adjust distances based on age

Materials / Equipment:

- Glove
- A baseball
- A space large enough for long toss

Time Commitment:

- 10+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- The goal of the game is to have as many points as possible at the end of the throwing session.

Game Description:

With this game, we will be working on throwing accuracy during our catch play while staying under a 90% rate of perceived effort (RPE). For each throw, the player can get 1 or 2 points based on their accuracy. The long-toss distance will be based off of the 90% RPE level.

Here is the point breakdown:

- Throws to the Body: 1pt
- Throws to the Head: 2pts

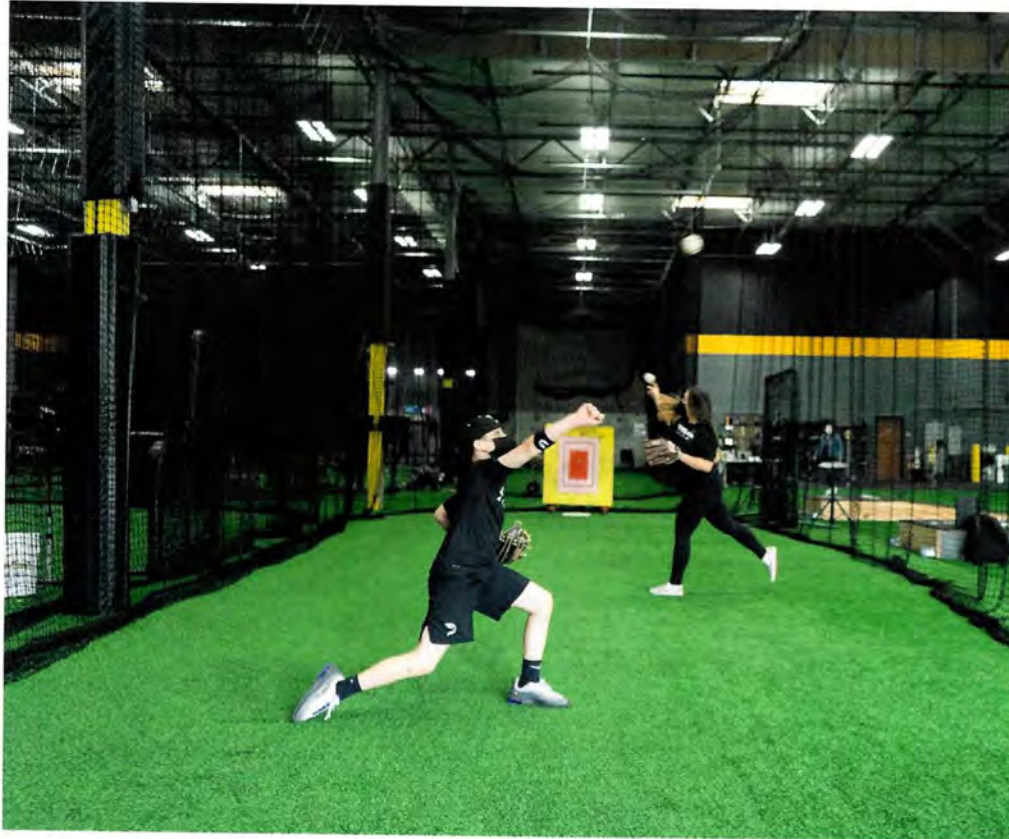
Here are recommended distances:

(DO NOT EXCEED 90% RPE
- STOP WHEN 90% RPE IS ENCOUNTERED)

RPE - rate of perceived exertion or effort level

Round 1: 30 ft - 10 throws
Round 2: 60 ft - 10 throws
Round 3: 90 ft - 10 throws
Round 4: 120 ft - 5 throws

It takes time for a player to understand their proper intent level. It is also something that changes as they get older and grow. Even though effort level is hard to quantify, coaches can tell players that **one- or two-hopping their throwing partner means that they are beyond 90% effort.**



Gaining an accurate feel for the level of effort a player is throwing at takes time. So expect some

back and forth between coaches and players on what an appropriate effort level is. ●

Indoor Adjustments:

If you are indoors but have access to a batting cage, you can put targets up on the cage for players to throw too. We would suggest throw down the lengthwise of the cage. Target may be different color yoga mats, a hula hoop, or string in the shape of a box. We recommend thicker string or rope, so it's easier to see. You will also need a ladder and ties to attach the non-string items.

JUST CHUCK IT

Skill Focus:

- Building arm strength and endurance through long toss

Playing Level:

- Ages 8 and up, adjust distances based on age

Materials / Equipment:

- Baseballs to throw
- A wide open space to long toss
- Optional: A tape measure

Time Commitment:

- 10+ minutes along with prior warmup time

Game Scoring:

- Players throw the ball as far as they possibly can. We are not worried about throwing to a partner—we are worried about max effort throwing. Distance is measured in the air; bounces and rolling do not count. Furthest distance wins.

Game Description:

To the best of your ability, you will want to match players of similar skill levels.

As players long toss, they will need to mark the distance they get. You could, for example, have players carry an object like a hitting plyo or hat as they move back, dropping it on the ground when they reach their max distance. We recommend coaches walk behind the players who are moving back in distance so they can mark how far they threw.

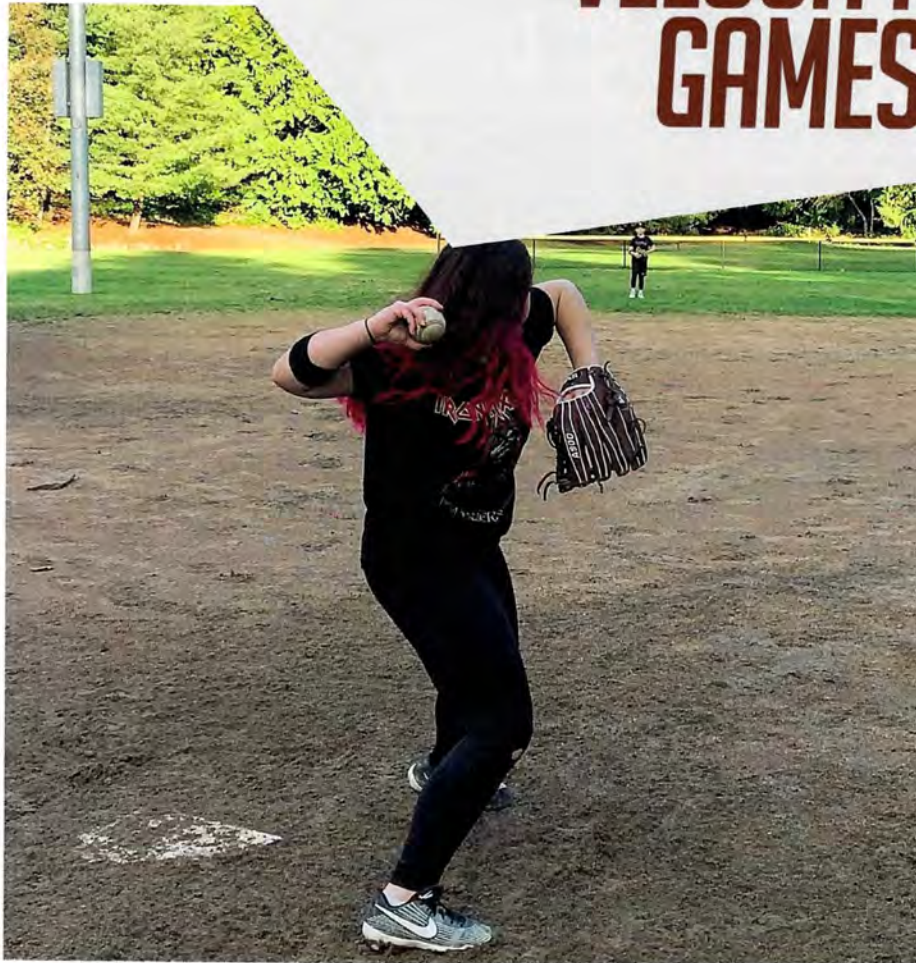
For reference, little league bases are 60 feet apart.

We strongly recommend throwing for 3-4 weeks before trying a high intent game. Once your team is past this point, you can replay this game every 3-4 weeks to gauge your team's progress over the course of the year.

We recommend that each player pair have 4 different chances over the course of the season to beat their baseline distance.

If you're practicing three times a week, break the team into three groups and have one team do the challenge each day. If you're practicing twice a week, you can split your team into two.

VELOCITY GAMES



A good season-long goal would be to see an increase in distance of 15-20%, with some examples of distances below.

Team 1
Assessed Distance: 80-100ft
Goal Distance: 120ft

Team 2
Assessed Distance: 95-120ft
Goal Distance: 144ft

Team 3
Assessed Distance: 110-150ft
Goal distance: 180ft ●

RADAR GUN WORLD SERIES

Skill Focus:

- Throwing Velocity

Playing Level:

- 8 years and up

Materials / Equipment:

- Radar gun
- Net to throw into

Time Commitment:

- 10+ minutes along with prior warmup time

Game Scoring:

- Throw as hard as possible.
Hardest throw or biggest increase wins.

Game Description:

Make sure athletes complete any warm-ups and catch play before beginning this game.

Split your team into two groups. It may help to stagger the start time that your players throw as well.

For example, you may have Group 1 start practice, spend 15 minutes getting ready to throw

then getting their velocities measured, with Group 2 starting their warm up after Group 1 finishes theirs.

Group 1: 5:00 - Start warm-up /
Group 2: does a hitting or fielding game

Group 1: 5:15 - Testing / Group 2: does a hitting or fielding game
Group 2: 5:15 - Start warm-up /
Group 1: does the hitting or fielding game that Group 2 played first

Group 2: 5:30 - Testing / Group 1: does the hitting or fielding game that Group 2 played first

You may also split your team into groups, depending on the number of coaches you have, with one of the groups playing this game while others do something else.

If you're working with a group of younger players who need more time and supervision in order to get through their warm-up, then it may be best to split the conventional Little League roster of 12 players into three groups of 4 players each, so that your schedule would



Pitchers can also play this game on the mound.

look like this:

Group 1: 5:00 - Start warm-up

Group 1: 5:15 - Testing

Group 2: 5:15 - Start warm-up

Group 2: 5:30 - Testing

Group 3: 5:30 - Start warm-up

Group 3: 5:45 - Testing

You may have kids run and crowd hop towards the radar gun. Or you can toss them ground balls or fly balls and once they field the ball they throw it towards the radar gun and net.

We would cap the total number of high intent throws at 10 or fewer.

Make it fun. Help them find some

swagger. Pump them up. Build your team culture.

This game is great for team culture and competitiveness, as each teammate can cheer each other on. If you find pulling all players at one time to be too logistically difficult, you can radar bullpens over the course of a week.

This is a great game to create a leaderboard for. Use the first 3-4 weeks to on-board with throwing intensity under 90% effort, then test radar velocity and retest every 3-4 weeks over the season. ●

TWO ZONES

Skill Focus:

- Throwing velocity and hitting a target

Playing Level:

- 8 years and up

Materials / Equipment:

- Baseballs
- Targets to throw to
- A radar gun to monitor intent levels
- A notebook to record results and scores

Time Commitment:

- 10-15 minutes depending on age

Game Scoring:

- Highest point total wins

Game Setup:

Do a previous bullpen where you track velocities so that you know the players' average throwing velocities.

Game Description:

For this game, we are in a bullpen-type setting with specific guidelines and point scoring system

to quantify how the bullpen is going. You will first set your players' baseline velocities. Then you will throw a bullpen with two zones as targets, a big and a small zone. The goal for the players is to throw as hard as they can into the small zone.

To summarize:

- 1) Set baseline velocity
- 2) Create a big target w/ two zones.

Scoring system:

+/- 10% of Baseline Velocity - 5pts
Same but in small zone - 1 pts

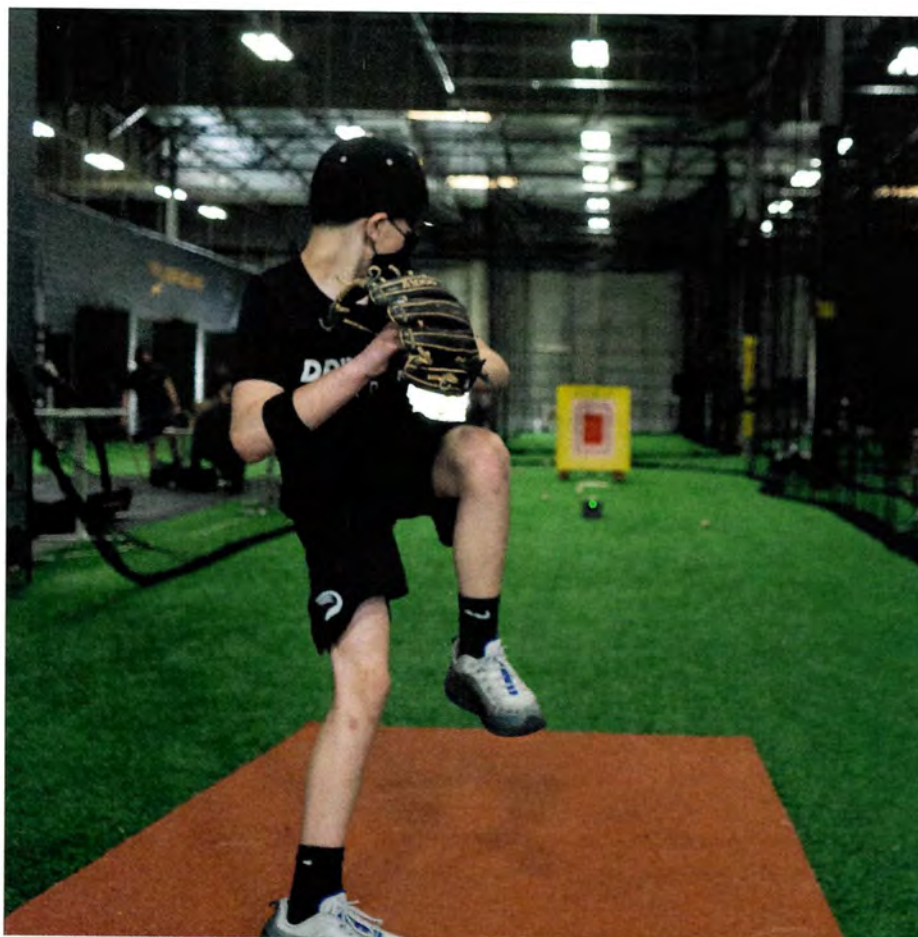
<+10% of Baseline - 10pts
Same but in small zone - 10pts

Workload - 21-35 pitches suggested

Enough to get in good volume of work but not compromise game performance

Modification:

Scale with distance according to ability.



Fun ideas to add:
“Yankee Stadium Bullpen” group activity. Make as much noise as possible. Coach / player in the box.

Coaches can use targets scaled down to ‘hit anywhere on the target’ to the specific strike zone. ●

LEVELS

Skill Focus:

- Hitting a target

Playing Level:

- 12U - You may be able to use this game with an older player who has less playing experience.

Materials / Equipment:

- Baseballs to throw with
- A space with sufficient distance to throw in
- A target (if a catcher is not available)

Time Commitment:

- 15+ minutes and will vary by age

Game Description:

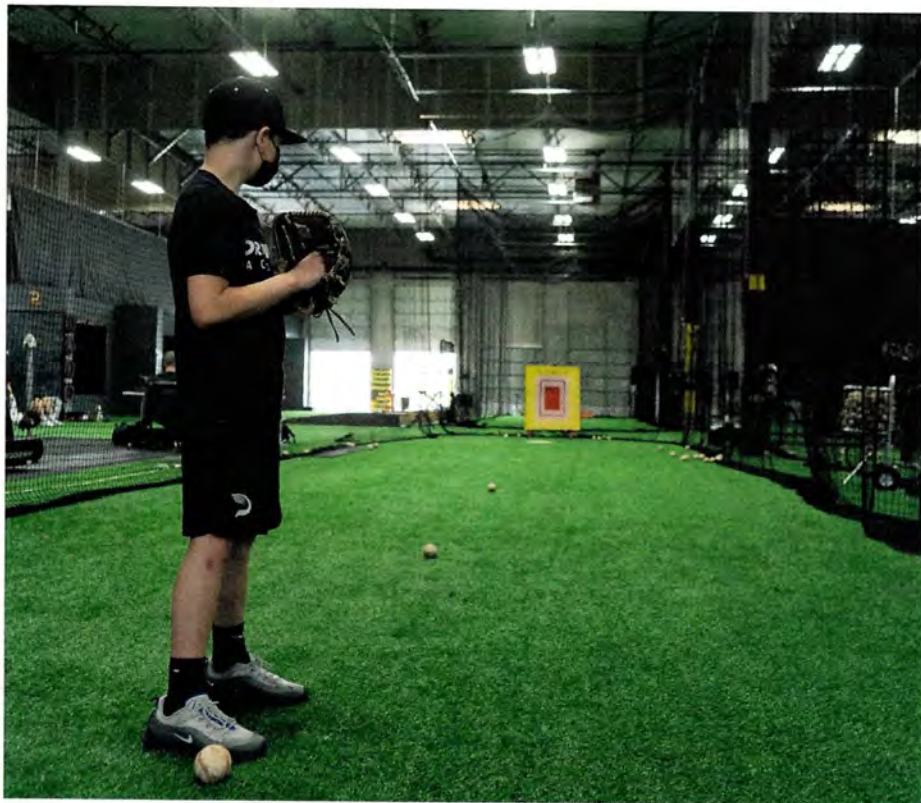
For every pitch that is thrown competitively in the strike zone, the player will get a point each time they hit a target. The target may be a strike zone, an area in a strike zone or a catcher. We recommend the following sequence

for throws:

- Level 1: 30 feet (32 feet Pony) - 6 throws
- Level 2: 38 feet (41 feet Pony) - 6 throws
- Level 3: 48 feet (50 feet Pony) - 8 throws

For each level, you will want to record their success rate. This is a great way to work on players' accuracy and help them build confidence at the different distances. For a player who is at an age where the mound is being pushed back, this is a great way to transition them to the farther distance.

Version 2: You can add a competition aspect by lining up two players at identical distances next to each other. One player will be lined up two or three feet to the left of home plate, and the other will be lined up two or three feet to the right.



The picture shows baseballs placed at 32 feet, 41 feet, and 50 feet.

Both players can start at the same time, and they are aiming at the same target. Whoever hits the target the most times wins. As a

tiebreaker, you can time them or say the winning is the player who finished each throw first. ●

CAN'T GET HURT THERE

Skill Focus:

- Hitting a target

Playing Level:

- 12 years and up

Materials / Equipment:

- Baseballs to throw with
- A space with sufficient throwing distance
- A target (if a catcher is not available).

Time Commitment:

- 15+ minutes and will vary by age

Game Scoring:

- The goal of the game is to have as many points as possible by the end of your bullpen.

Game Setup:

Have a target and locations set before the bullpen begins. This could be anything from a command trainer or strike zone you purchased to a yoga mat with tape or sharpie on it. We would recommend dividing the zone into squares or triangles if you are making

your own.

Game Description:

There are a number of ways to score this game. We would start by breaking up the bullpen into four levels with each level focused on one specific part of the zone.

An example being:

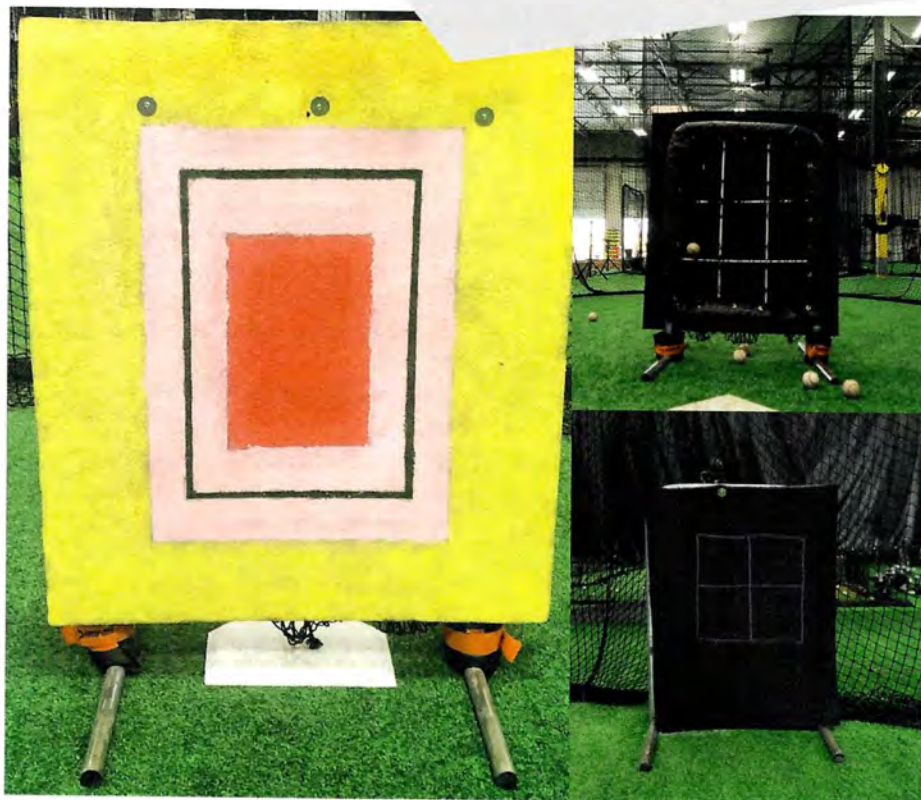
- 1pt per location hit
- Level 1: Low Strike - 8 Throws
- Level 2: High Strike - 8 Throws
- Level 3: Low & Outside Strike - 8 throws
- Level 4: High & Inside - 8 throws

If you have two players throwing a bullpen, have them rotate after each level.

Version 2:

For each level, pick two zones and rotate, with the first half of the pitches at one zone and the second half of the pitches at the other zone.

BULLPEN GAMES



Targets can be creative. Coaches or athletes can use chalk on a wall or a yoga mat on a fence with tape as a strike zone. The most important piece is athletes understand where they are trying to throw the ball.

An example being:

- 1pt per location hit
- Level 1: Low & High Strike - 8 Throws
- Level 2: Inside and Outside

Strike - 8 Throws

- Level 3: Low & High Strike - 8 Throws
- Level 4: Inside and Outside Strike - 8 Throws ●

HORSE

Skill Focus:

- Hitting a target

Playing Level:

- Ages 8 and up, can adjust zones according to age

Materials / Equipment:

- Baseballs, target to throw to

Time Commitment:

- 10+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- The goal of the game is to not be the player to spell HORSE first.

Game Setup:

Have a target and locations set before the bullpen begins. This could be anything from a command trainer or strike zone you purchased to a yoga mat with tape or sharpie on it. We would recommend dividing the zone into squares or triangles if you are making your own.

Note: For the youngest athletes, this game can be simplified to simply hitting the strike zone if they are switching off with a teammate.

Game Description:

Pair up players for bullpens, either one-on-one or two-on-two depending on the group size.

We would recommend starting this at a distance of 30 feet and then moving back after a series of 'bullpens'.

After warming up, the first player to go calls out a section of the strike zone he is aiming at. If he hits that zone, then the other player has a chance to throw and hit that zone. If player two can't hit the zone, then they get a letter.

If player one can't hit the zone they are aiming for, then player two gets a chance to voice a target and throw.



If you play this game more than once, we recommend matching players who may have similar skills, while sometimes matching

them with kids with higher skill levels to challenge each player to get better. ●

FIELDING GAMES NOTES

Most of these games focus on simply fielding the ball effectively.

Recommended fielding tools:

- Cones, flags, tennis balls (to replace baseballs)

For the youngest athletes that struggle, don't be afraid to use a bigger ball for practice. A softball or even a soccer/handball/old basketball may be used for infield

work. Because these balls are large you don't need to use a glove, but athletes will need to use both hands to bend down and field the ball.

Other recommended equipment

- A whiteboard to keep score for games or write rules down on. •

GOLDEN GLOVE / LAST MAN STANDING

Skill Focus:

- Fielding Grounders

Playing Level:

- Ages 8 and up

Materials / Equipment:

- A space with nothing behind it that could be broken
- Baseballs or tennis balls and each player with their gloves

The coach can either hit the ball or throw the ball towards the players.

Time Commitment:

- 10+ minutes

Game Goals:

The main goal of this game is to be the last man standing. We want our players fielding the play cleanly in a pressure situation, which is created by the competitive game environment.

Game Description:

All players line up in one line. We would recommend a group size of 6

for the game, but more players can participate.

One player steps out to field a ground ball.

Coach will throw ground balls, short hops, linedrives at the players. To stay in line, the player must field the ball cleanly. If a player is 'out', we recommend they stand near the coach or anywhere away from the line of players who are still in the game.

When there are two players remaining and one player does not field a rep, the last player must "prove it" by fielding one last ball cleanly.

Last player to be in line wins.

This should be a fast-paced game where the coach is throwing, or hitting, each rep quickly.

After the players field, they should quickly move to the back of the line to get ready. Coach is the umpire, not the players. ●



AROUND THE WORLD

Skill Focus:

- Fielding ground balls

Playing Level:

- 11 years old and up

Materials / Equipment:

- Each player needs their own glove and a ball
- Either a tennis ball or regular baseball

Time Commitment:

- 10+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- First team to field all shorthops cleanly wins

Game Description:

Pair the players into teams of two, with one player holding a baseball. Make sure players are four to six feet apart from the pair of players next to them.

The players should be stationed

at least six feet apart.

Once a coach says 'Go', player one, with the baseball, throws a short hop to player two. Player two fields the short hop and throws a short hop to player one.

Order of throws:

- Short hop out front twice
- Short hop to their glove side
- Short hop to their back hand

Once each team gets through all short hops, both players sit down.

Version 2:

This game can be played with a number of players lined up in a row. You can then have one row stay in place while the other row rotates one partner over.

Coach will say, "Ready, set go!" Both players must successfully field short hops out front twice,



glove side, back hand and then sit down. First team with both players sitting down wins. Ensure that each team has enough space. We want to avoid guys stepping

on ankles. Make sure to partner teams evenly. That will create a fun competitive environment. Consider changing partners every round. ●

FOUR CORNERS

Skill Focus:

- Scoop tossing and throwing across the infield

Playing Level:

- 11 years old and up

Materials / Equipment:

- Up to an infield worth of space
- Cones or bases
- One baseball per group

Time Commitment:

- 15+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- Be the quickest team twice around the square, which will lead to fielding speed increasing. Will help for a game setting when they must make split second decisions and quick plays.

Game Set-up:

Split the team into even groups of four.

Place cones in a square formation evenly apart.

Assign one player per cone or base.

Note: If short players, you can also group players into groups of 3 instead of 4.

Game Description:

They will underhand toss (like a double play) to the person clockwise from them. Once the ball has been flipped two times around the square, everyone sits down. Fastest team wins.

This can be done with two teams going at once or using a stopwatch and recording times. Make sure there is enough space that nothing will get hit and broken if an over-throw happens. Game can be expanded to full catch when outside.

Remind players to not totally ruin their technique on the throw just to be fast.

Version 2:

Go through the same sequence but with backhand tosses, good for



players who are in middle school.

Version 3:

Move the cones back so that they are 10-15 feet apart and do quick rotations and throws similar to how a shortstop or second baseman would throw when trying to turn a double play. In this version,

players should aim for all throws to be to the glove side.

Make sure to keep intent high, as adding in these throws will likely decrease intent because players will be afraid to overthrow their partners. ●

“21” SHORTHOPS

Skill Focus:

- Short hop fielding skills while making the play as fast as possible

Playing Level:

- 11 years and up

Materials / Equipment:

- Each player needs their own glove and a ball
- Either a tennis ball or regular baseball

Time Commitment:

- 5+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- First to 21 points wins

Game Description:

Partner each kid up; we would

suggest partnering up players who you perceive to have similar skill sets.

Each player will throw shorthops to one another to different zones.

- 6 throws middle - 1 point
- 6 throws glove side - 2 points
- 6 throws backhand - 3 points

Version 2:

Have a coach call out where the next throw goes, either 'middle', 'glove side', or 'backhand'. Players may also throw to the zone they want, but watch that they don't intentionally give their teammate very easy throws for 1 point or throws that are too difficult. ●



GROUNDNER GRAND PRIX

Skill Focus:

- Fielding the ball on the move side to side and doing so quickly

Playing Level:

- Ages 8 and up

Materials / Equipment:

- Each player needs their own glove and a ball
- Either a tennis ball or regular baseball
- A space with about 10-15 feet so they can go side to side
- Cones
- Stopwatch (can use phone timer as well)

Time Commitment:

- 10+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- Most ground balls fielded in 60 seconds; designed to get the players moving fast and competing hard against their partner

Game Description:

Partner each player up.
Players should stand between

10-15 feet away from one another.

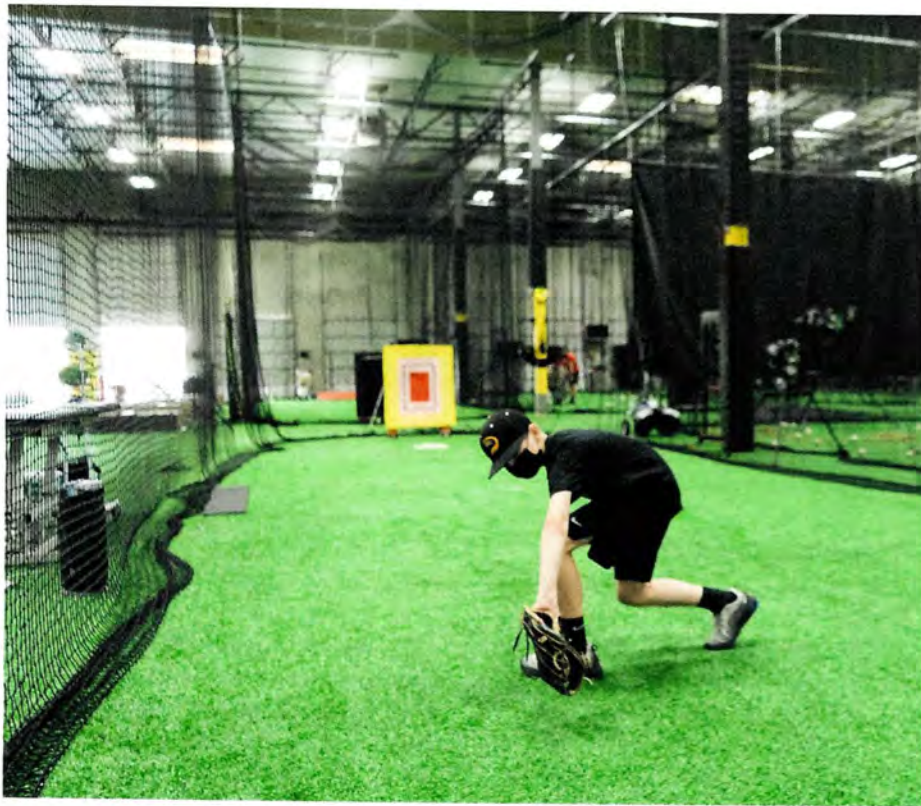
Once players are facing each other, cones should be placed 8-15 feet apart, with the player starting in the middle.

Player one has the tennis ball, with player two starting an equal distance between the two cones. Player one throws/rolls the tennis ball to one cone. Player two shuffles over to field the ball, fields the ball and throws it back to his partner.

Each player will take a turn fielding ground balls while shuffling between the laid out cones. Players should remain in fielding position the entire time. Player who fields the most balls in 60 seconds wins.

You will need a stopwatch to keep time and cones for distance markers.

After a minute is up, the players can switch.



Version 2:

Move the cones further apart—up to 20 feet—and have the player run to each cone instead of shuffling. This will work on testing their range on forehands and backhands.

Each player should go no more than twice, as this game is a little bit physically taxing. You can keep track of high scores as the season goes on to make it even more fun. ●

FILL THE BUCKET: INFIELD

An easy way to finish off infield practice that you can use to gauge progress of players' abilities over time.

Skill Focus:

- Fielding grounders and making accurate throws

Playing Level:

- Ages 8 and up

Materials / Equipment:

- Each player needs their own glove
- An empty bucket at the base the players are throwing to (first base in this case)

Time Commitment:

- 10+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- Number of balls left outside the bucket, the less the better

Game Set-Up:

You'll need an empty bucket of baseballs at first base for first basemen to put the balls they catch into.

If you only have one bucket, empty the bucket where the coach is hitting and put it at first.

If you have multiple buckets, keep a bucket of baseballs by the coach and an empty bucket by first base.

Game Description:

Have players go to their infield positions. Depending on the number of players at practice, this could be 2-4 players per position.

Hit grounders across the infield and have players throw them to first base. Once the first baseman catches the ball, he can put the ball in the bucket.

Balls that are not fielded cleanly as grounders or balls not caught at first base should be placed on the ground outside the bucket. Balls overthrown to first base should also be put outside the bucket.

Since the number of baseballs in a ball bucket often changes due



Blue dots represent the fielders that are up first. Red dots represent the infielders that are next up. Orange is where you would place the bucket for the first baseman to put the baseballs.

to balls being lost, it's easiest to keep track of the number of balls outside the bucket as opposed to a percentage.

After one round, have athletes rotate infield positions.

At Driveline we prefer to have players rotate positions, so we would have them rotate positions through practice or multiple practices. ●

FILL THE BUCKET: OUTFIELD

A straightforward way to measure players' progress in their ability to catch fly balls, great for younger kids.

Skill Focus:

- Catching fly balls

Playing Level:

- Ages 8 and up

Materials / Equipment:

- Each player needs their own glove
- An empty bucket at each outfield position

Time Commitment:

- 10+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- Number of balls left outside the bucket, the less the better

Game Set-Up:

You'll need an empty bucket to be brought out to each outfield

position.

Divide the baseballs so that each outfield position gets hit the same number.

Game Description:

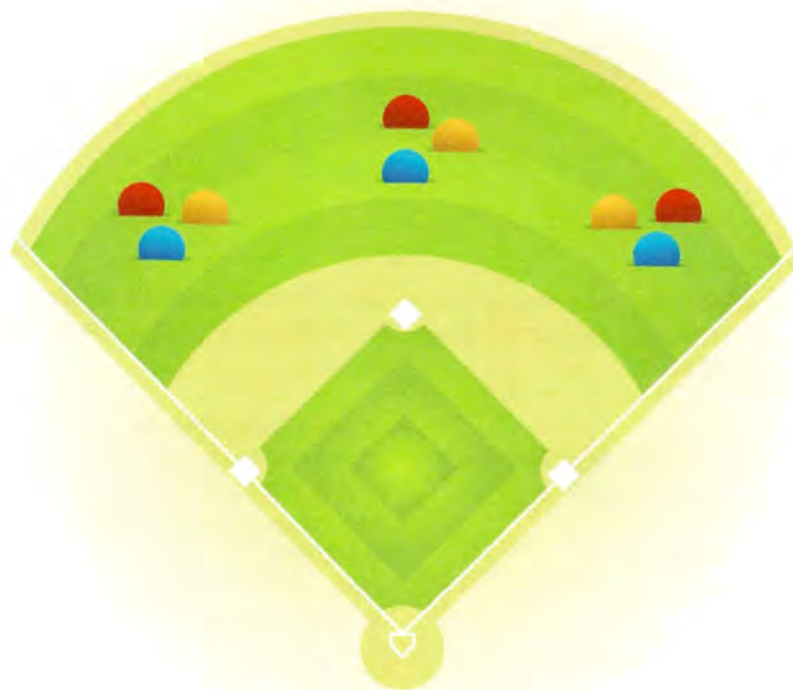
Split the team into equal groups in left field, center field, and right field. Have each group bring an empty bucket to the outfield position they're at.

A coach, or coaches, takes turns hitting the ball to different outfield positions. Once caught, the balls get put into the bucket.

After one round, have players rotate outfield positions.

For mis-hit fungos, you can have outfielders either throw it back to you or put the ball in the bucket if they field the grounder cleanly.

If you have multiple coaches, have each hit a ball to LF and RF,



Blue dots represent the fielders that are up first. Red dots represent the outfielders that are next up. Orange is where you would place the bucket for the outfielders to put the baseballs.

then have them hit a ball to CF back to back, then go back to the corners.

For young kids—or for coaches with bad fungo work—you can have them put fielded OF GBs into the bucket as well. ●

FILL THE BUCKET: CUTOFFS

Get athletes to be more engaged in cutoffs by creating a simple scoring system for reps.

Skill Focus:

- Reading fly balls and throwing to the proper cutoff

Playing Level:

- Ages 8 and up

Materials / Equipment:

- Each player needs their own glove
- Empty buckets at the bases you're throwing to (second and third)

Time Commitment:

- 10+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- Number of balls left outside the buckets, the less the better

Game Set-Up:

You'll need an empty bucket at second and third.

Divide the baseballs so that each outfield position gets hit the same number.

Game Description:

Split the team into groups between left field, center field, right field, second base, third base and shortstop.

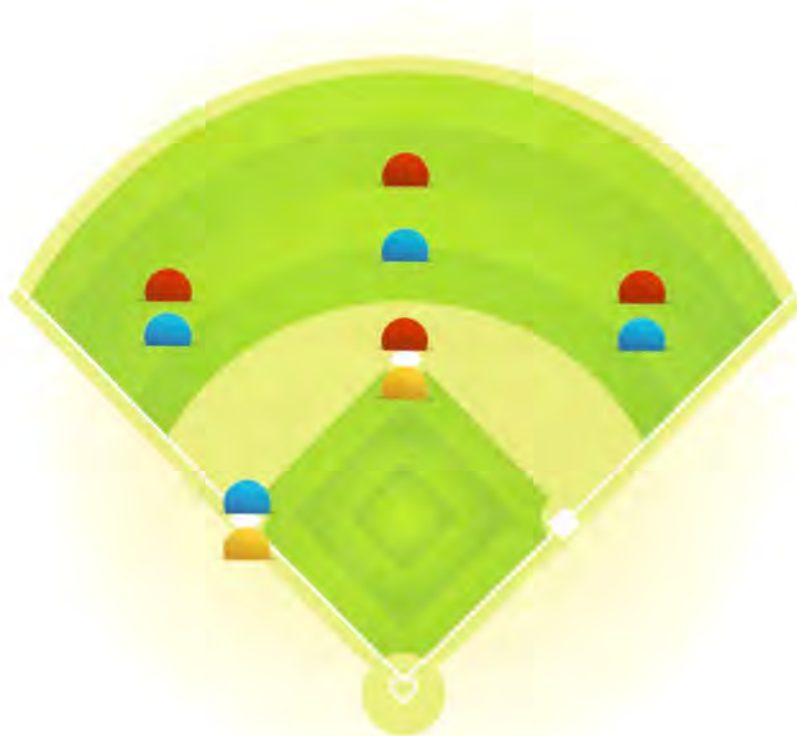
A coach, or coaches, takes turns hitting the ball to different outfield positions.

Fly balls can be played as tag plays from second to third, but this game is best suited for grounders or line drives in the gap and communication between players.

Grounders to the fielders, in the gaps, or over the fielders' heads can be played where the coaches yell for the ball to go.

If the outfielder successfully fields the ball, throws to the cut-off man and the cut-off man throws to the base, the ball can go in the bucket.

If the ball is mis-played, dropped, thrown to the wrong base



Blue dots represent the fielders that are up first. Red dots represent the outfielders that are next up. The red dot at second represents the infielder there. The orange dot represents the bucket at second. The blue dot at third represents the infielder there, the orange dot represents the bucket at third.

or over the cut-off man's head, then the ball goes outside the bucket.

After one round, have players rotate between different positions.

Athletes throwing in game-like situations will likely be throwing

at high intent. Because of this, we would recommend playing this game only once a week. Coaches should be aware how the players are feeling and how often, and at what intensity, they have been throwing. ●

ALL TEAM GAMES

Many of the All Team games that we list out here focus on a combination of the skills worked on previously in this book. These games revolve around hitting and defense. With hitters we'll be working on approach and hitting the ball all over the field, and we'll be looking to field live balls off the bat.

LIGHTNING ROUND: INFIELD ONLY

A great game to get live infield reps while also working on bat to ball skills in two strike counts.

Skill Focus:

- Getting in as many “live” reps as possible in the infield while working on two-strike approach

Playing Level:

- 8 years old and up

Materials / Equipment:

- A field
- Baseballs
- A turtle or hitting cage
- At least 10 total players and your standard baseball equipment for a game

Time Commitment:

- 30+ minutes

Game Goals:

- Fielders: Field the ball cleanly and throw to first
- Hitters: Make contact with the baseball and hit it to the outfield

Game Description:

Divide your players into two or

three teams.

If split in two teams, one team is located at the standard infield positions and the other team is located in the batter's box. If you have an uneven number of players, you can decide where the backup infielders play. You may have one player at third, second and short with two first basemen that rotate.

If split into three teams (of 4 or 5), have two teams play the field so that you don't have to wait for players to get back in position. Team One and Two play the field while Team Three hits. After Team Three gets two at-bats each, they go to the field, Team One comes to hit and Team Two stays in the field. We would recommend three teams since having more defensive players means less waiting.

We would suggest a coach throwing BP, specifically throwing pitches that are difficult to hit. These pitches are supposed to be challenging and not thrown in a hitter's sweet spot.

If a coach wants, they can have the hitters swing at every ball thrown.



Red dots represent the hitters waiting to hit. Blue dots represent the infielders. Backup infielders can stand on the edge of the grass.

Balls hit on the ground count for no points and can be played live by the defense.

Balls hit to the outfield are worth one or two points. It's up to the coach or team's discretion, but singles can count for one point and extra base hits can count for two points.

Depending on how many players you have, you can rotate the teams. If you have 4-5 hitters, they can hit twice before rotating. If

you have more than 6 players per group, you can rotate after each at-bat.

Version 2:

Have batters run out the balls they hit, grounders just to first and balls hit to the outfield as singles or doubles. This version can be played for standard runs instead of points. Adding running may also add more time to rotate between teams. ●

LIGHTNING ROUND: OUTFIELD ONLY

The next level of our 'lightning round' series where we focus on only hitting balls in our sweet spot.

Skill Focus:

- Getting in as many "live" reps as possible in the outfield while working on hitting the ball hard in the air

Playing Level:

- 8 years old and up

Materials / Equipment:

- A field
- Baseballs
- A turtle or hitting cage
- At least 10 total players and your standard baseball equipment for a game

Time Commitment:

- 30+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- Fielders: Field & throw cleanly to second base/cut off
- Hitters: Make contact and hit the ball to the outfield

Game Description:

Divide your players into two or

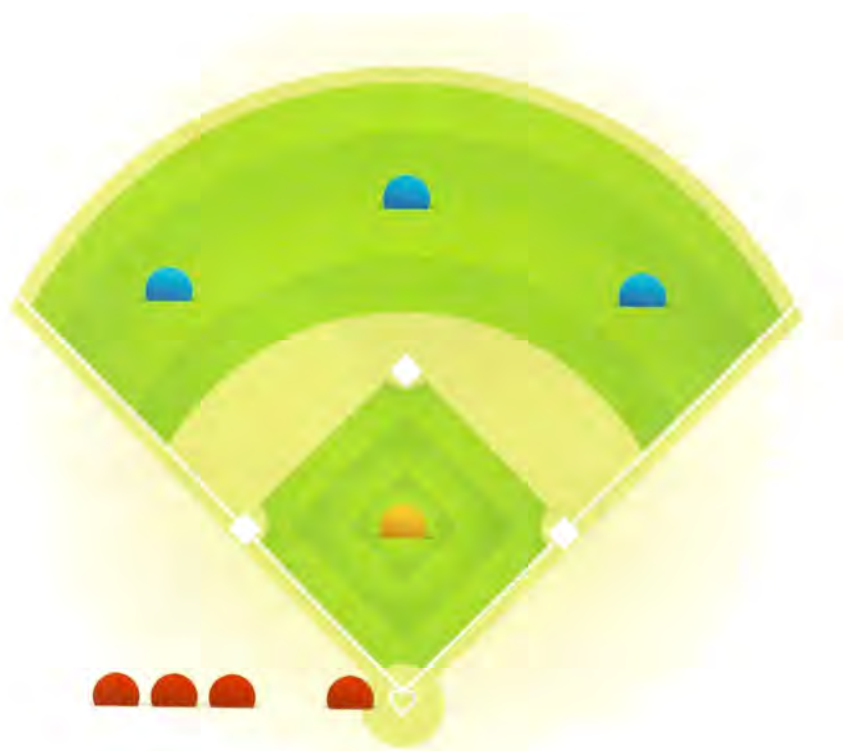
three teams.

If split in two teams, one team is located at the standard outfield positions and the other team is located in the batter's box. If you have an uneven number of players, you can decide where the backup outfielders play. Two teams of 6 works well since you will have two outfielders at each position.

If split into three teams (of 4 or 5), have two teams play the field so you don't have to wait for players to get back in position. Team One & Two play the field, while Team Three hits. After Team Three gets two at-bats each, they go to the field, Team One comes to hit and Team Two stays in the field. We would recommend three teams since having more defensive players means less waiting.

We would suggest a coach throwing BP, specifically throwing balls that players can hit hard and far in the air. These pitches are supposed to be in their sweet spot, so we would suggest no penalty for taking a pitch.

Balls hit to the outfield are worth one or two points. Singles can count for one point and extra base



Red dots represent the hitters waiting to hit. Blue dots represent the outfielders. Backup outfielders can stand behind the outfielders that are up. Grounders that are obvious outs count as no points

hits can count for two points. Flyouts and obvious ground ball outs count for no points.

To keep the players moving, we suggest having a coach play at second base or the cut-off man.

Depending on how many players you have, you can rotate the teams. If you have 4-5 hitters, players can hit twice before rotating. If you have more than 6 players per group, you can rotate after

each at-bat.

Version 2:

Have batters run out the balls they hit, grounders just to first, singles to first base and extra base hits just to second (because there are no infielders). This version can be played for standard runs instead of points. Adding running may also add more time to rotate between teams. ●

SPLIT THE FIELD

A game that mixes in all elements of a baseball game that you can tweak to the specific skills that you are looking to work on.

Skill Focus:

- Swinging fast and trying to hit the ball to specific parts of the field

Playing Level:

- 8 years old and up

Game Goals:

The main goal of this game is getting your batters to swing as hard as they can, trying to hit the ball in the air to the side of the field of the fielders. It also is fun and gets the players to think outside the box on where they need to be each play.

Materials / Equipment:

- A field
- Baseballs
- A turtle or hitting cage
- At least 10 total players and your standard baseball equipment for a game

Time Commitment:

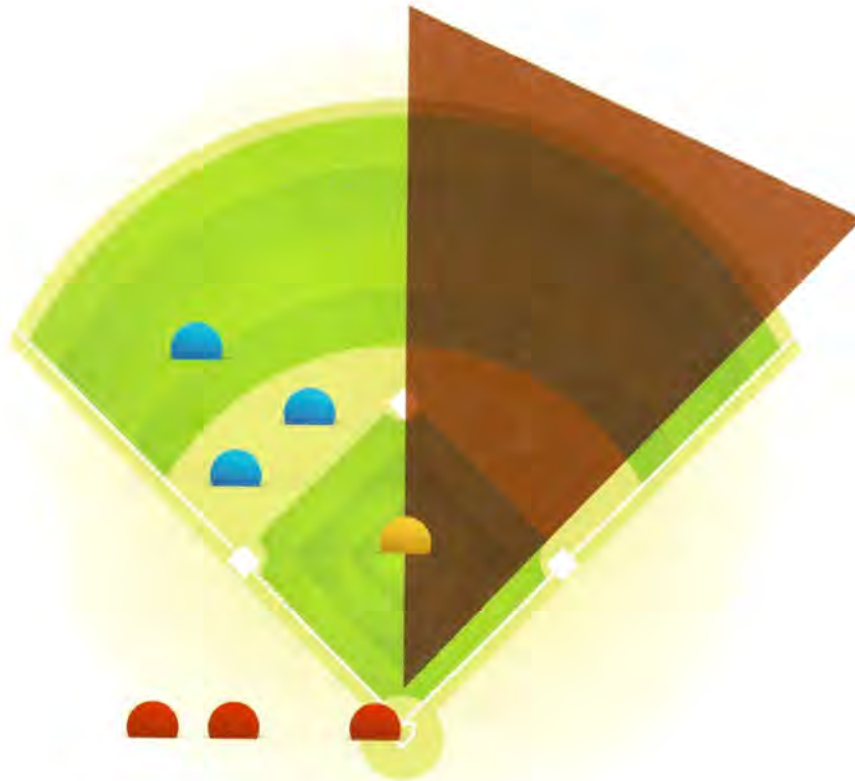
- 20+ minutes

Game Description:

Split your players into two teams. One team will bat while the other is in the field.

You will need to choose a side of the field for the fielders to play on. A center fielder is optional, depending on the number of players you have. This means that you are leaving one side of the field open. A coach's options are:

Left Field	Left Field	Right Field	Right Field
Third Base	Center Field	Second Base	Center Field
Shortstop	Third Base	First Base	Second Base
	Shortstop		First Base



We would suggest a coach play first when position players are on the left side of the field.

We would recommend a coach throw BP since balls should be thrown to specific sides of the plate.

When players are on the left side of the infield, throw balls to the third base side of the plate so righties need to pull the ball and lefties need to go to the opposite field.

When players are on the right side of the infield, throw balls to the first base side of the plate so righties need to go to the opposite field and lefties need to pull the ball.

- Any single to the side of the field

the fielders are on counts as 1 point.

- Any extra base hit to the side of the field the fielders are on counts at 2 points.
- Any hit to the side of the field no fielders are on counts as zero points.
- We would recommend no penalties for taking a pitch.

This game can also be played with less than a full team. It's possible with as few as 6 players (left field, third, shortstop or the equivalent on the right side of the field) and three hitters. ●

SHORTHAND CRICKET

An easy way to play a competitive game without a full team of players, this game can also be played with a full team is desired!

Skill Focus:

- Swinging hard and communicating with your team

Playing Level:

- 12 years old and up

Materials / Equipment:

- At least 8 total players
- An open field
- Some tennis balls
- You will also want two throw-down bases for home and the “field” base

Time Commitment:

- 20+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- The goal of this game is to put the players in a different environment, which will make them think about their positioning,

while hitters try to hit the ball far.

Game Setup:

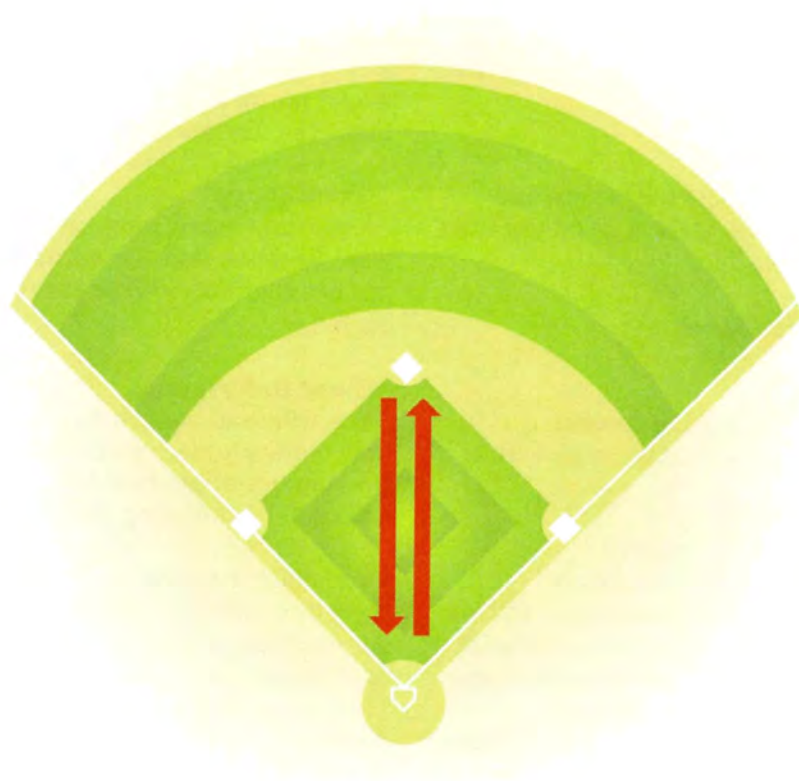
If you're on a field, make sure to set one base directly in line behind the pitcher (where second base normally would be).

Game Description:

Split your team into two groups; one group is hitting and the other is fielding. Preferably the fielders will not have gloves.

The coach will pitch the tennis ball to the batter, who will try to hit it as far as they can. The player will then run directly to second base, or first then second if the bases are set up that way.

If they make it to second base before the defensive team gets the ball back to the pitcher, then the batter is safe. The base runner must be on a base before the ball is in the pitcher's hand to be safe. When the base runner reaches home, they have scored a run. ●



This game keeps things simple yet unique. For the very youngest athletes, you can change the rules, so they run to first base.

LIVE AT-BATS STRUCTURE

How we structure our live at-bats at Driveline

Skill Focus:

- Live at-bats for hitters and pitchers. Make it as competitive as possible.

Playing Level:

- Any age

Materials / Equipment:

- A field or batting cage with a mound
- Baseballs
- Catcher (optional)
- A radar gun (optional)
If you have access to a HitTrax or a Rapsodo, this can be added in as well to create more competition
- We also highly recommend using TRAQ to gather all of the velocity and at-bat results in one place

Time Commitment:

- 30+ minutes, depending on number of pitchers

Game Scoring:

- Create a competitive environment that allows both the hitter

and pitcher to get the reps they would normally get in a game without the defense behind them.

Game Set up:

Know how many pitchers you want to throw and the number of pitches that they will be throwing each day.

Game Description:

You will first want to figure out how many pitchers you have and the number of pitches that they will each be throwing that day.

You will then want to split the hitters into different groups to try to get every player as even a number of at-bat opportunities as possible. Then, each hitter will take a turn having a standard at-bat against a pitcher. We recommend having a coach call balls and strikes for youth teams to keep everything running smoothly. If possible, use a radar gun to incentivize a pitcher to throw hard and to check for dips in a pitcher's velocity. ●



STRENGTH GAME NOTES

Strength is a large differentiator between amateur athletes, and while we do have our youth athletes lift it isn't reasonable to bring a whole weight room to a practice field. Therefore, our strength games focus more on power aspects with a shorter equipment list. In this book, our strength work is similar to our skill work in that it is game based.

Recommended strength tools:

- Medicine balls, can be lighter in weight (2,4,6 lbs balls)

- Cones, flags and a measuring tape
Not necessary but can be nice: chair, box (such as for box jumps)

MED BALL RELAY RACE

An added twist to a regular relay race where an added strength component can make a big difference.

Skill Focus:

- Sprinting speed and lateral quickness

Playing Level:

- Ages 8 and up

Materials / Equipment:

- 3 medicine balls per “team”
- An open space large enough to run this game

Time Commitment:

- 10+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- Team that crosses the finish line first wins

Game Set-Up:

Create a starting line, either with tape or another object.

Set out three (or six) medicine balls 5, 10 and 15 yards away from the starting line.

Game Description:

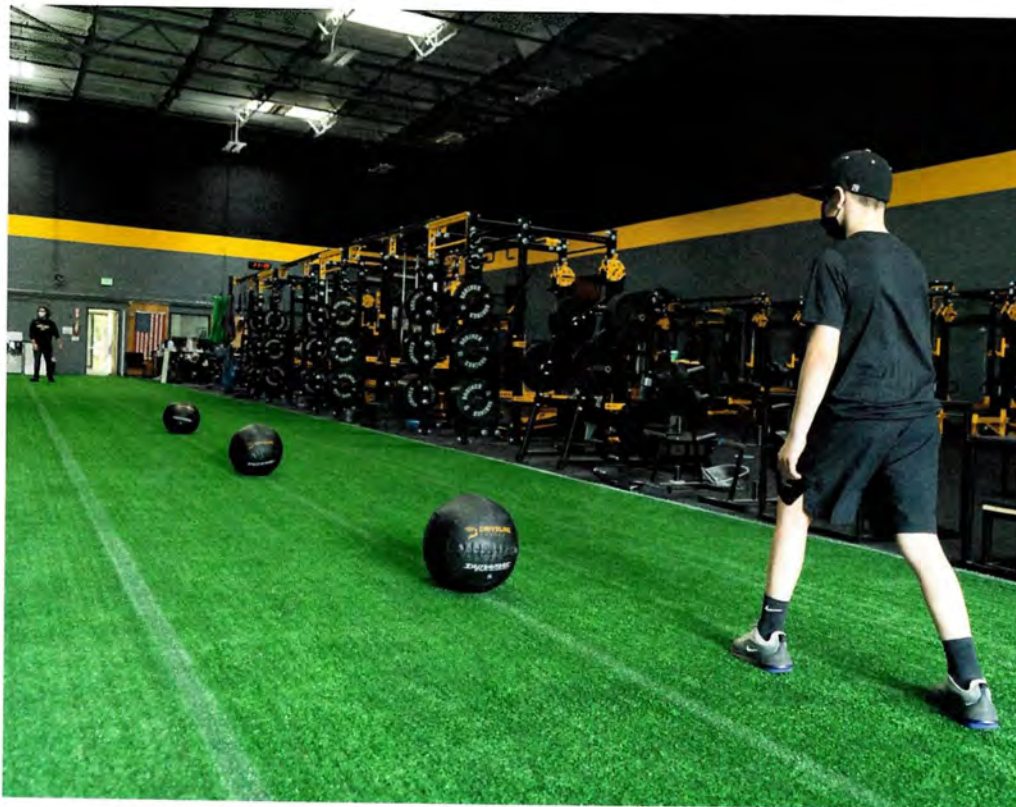
Break the players you have into two groups.

Once you have teams broken up, bring the first three members of each team to the starting line.

Player one on each team runs to the first medicine ball, picks it up and carries it back to the starting line. Once player one crosses the finish line, player two runs to the second medicine ball, picks it up and carries it back to the starting line. As soon as player two crosses the starting line with the medicine ball, player three can run to the final medicine ball. The team whose ‘player three’ is the first to cross the finish line with the final medicine ball wins.

Once all three members of each team cross the starting line with the last medicine ball, a coach and players can help roll the medicine balls back to their starting spot.

MEDICINE BALL GAMES



If you can find more medicine balls, you can increase the team size. For example, if you had four medicine balls, you could break your team into groups of four.

Have them complete the relay as you use a stopwatch or phone timer to keep track and see which team can finish the race in the shortest period of time. ●

MED BALL STONE LOAD RELAY

Best used with a heavy medicine ball, bringing a competitive 'strongest man' competition down to the youth level.

Skill Focus:

- Sprint speed and leg strength

Playing Level:

- 14U - Older teams could play this also

Materials / Equipment:

- 3-5 med balls per team, depending on the length of the course you would like
- A platform of some sort to put the medicine balls on top of
- An open space to run the game

Time Commitment:

- 10+ minutes

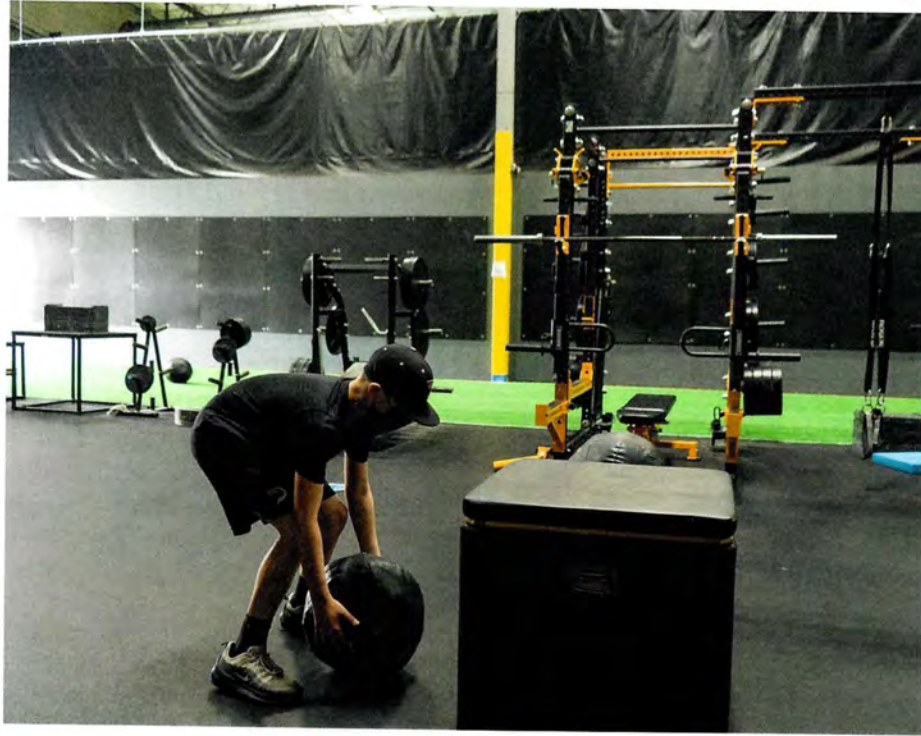
Game Scoring:

- The team that crosses the finish line first wins.
- The player with the fastest time wins.

Game Description:

This game involves heavy med balls in front of a 24 inch box located about 10-15 yards from the start line.

A player runs down, picks up the ball and loads it onto the box and runs back to the line. Once they cross the line, the next teammate can go. This can be done for time or with 2 teams competing against one another. ●



MEDICINE BALL RACE

A fun sprinting game that can really challenge players with the size and weight of medicine balls used. No one wants to be the one that loses to a medicine ball.

Skill Focus:

- Rotational power and sprinting

Playing Level:

- 12+

Materials / Equipment:

- A heavy medicine ball (relative to your players' ages)
- Something to symbolize a starting and finish line

Time Commitment:

- 5+ minutes

Game Goals:

- The sprinter can't let the medicine ball cross the finish line.

Game Description:

Have your team line up in two lines by the starting line.

Have a finish line marked out

~10 feet away. The finish line can be moved forward or back depending on the age of your players and the weight of the medicine ball.

Player one and player two are the first to go. Have them stand at the starting line.

Player one picks up a medicine ball and player two gets ready to run.

Player one throws the medicine ball and player two starts to run towards the finish line.

Player two attempts to stop the medicine ball from crossing the finish line.

For lighter medicine balls, the player throwing can start to throw, and the player running can start to run when a coach says 'go'. For heavier medicine balls, you can have the player who is running wait to start running until the ball is released. ●



Setting up markers that athletes have to run around can count as a finish line. So the athlete needs to run around a marker to 'save' the medicine ball from crossing the finish line. In this picture, both the athlete running and throwing started about 10 feet to the right. The athlete shown has run around the marker and is trying to block the medicine ball.

MED BALL VOLLEYBALL

This will get your players' competitive juices flowing while working on rotational power.

Skill Focus:

- Explosive strength, getting our athletes to move as fast as possible with a heavier object

Playing Level:

- 9U +, age & strength of athletes should determine medicine ball weight

Materials / Equipment:

- 2-3 medicine balls, depending on how many groups you can form your team into. For ages middle school and up, these balls are usually 6 lbs or more. At younger ages you can use a basketball or soccer ball instead of a medicine ball.

A hurdle or barrier players can see through, such as a fence, for the medicine balls to be thrown over.

Time Commitment:

- 5+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- First team to ten points wins. One team gets a point when the medicine ball is dropped on the other side or does not make it over the fence/barrier.

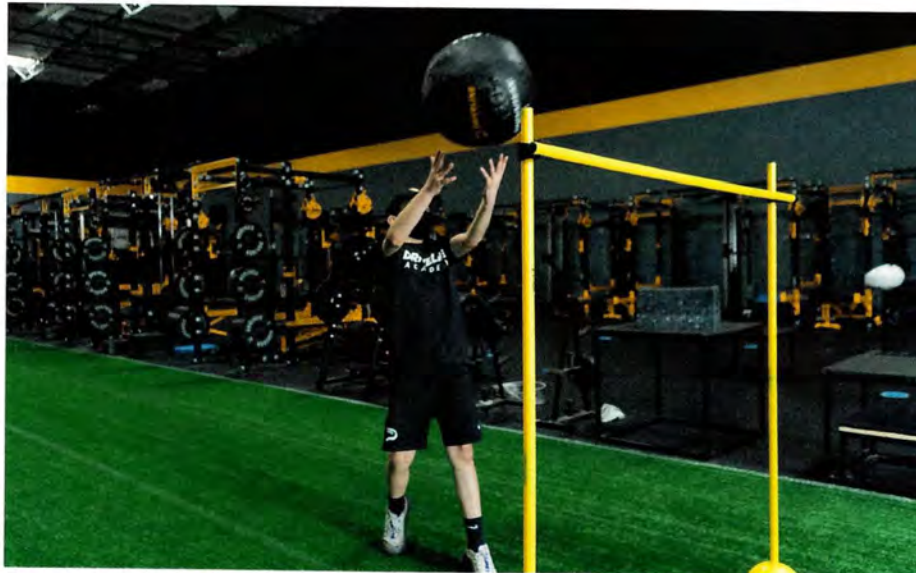
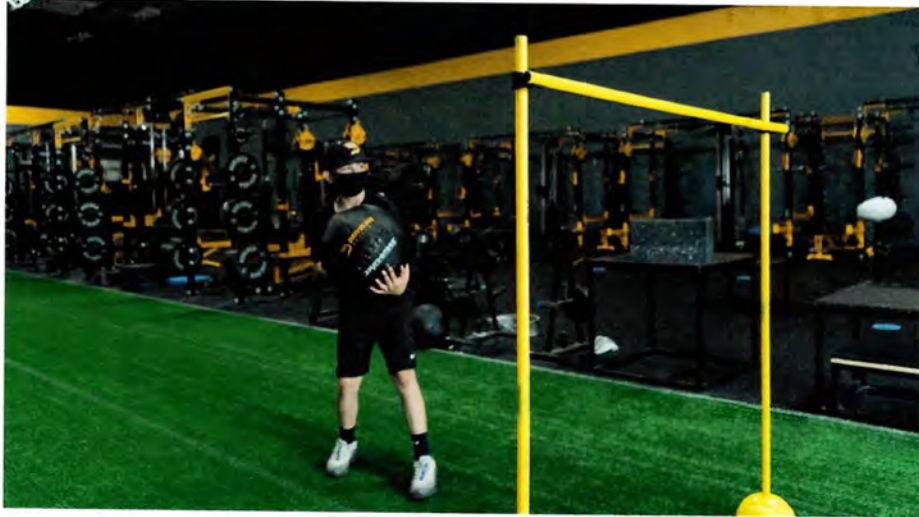
Players develop explosiveness by throwing the medicine ball up in the air and the ability to accept force by catching the medicine ball.

Game Description:

Use a moderately heavy medicine ball for the age group that is playing. We would suggest using a hurdle set at max height (around 5 feet) for a "net". Other objects can be used, such as a fence or a string, but we suggest that players be able to see through the object to the other team.

Players should be broken up into groups of 3-4 and positioned on either side of the net. One player starts with the medicine ball and throws it over the hurdle to the other team.

A player on the other team must make the catch and return the medicine ball to the other side.



If one team drops the medicine ball, then the other team gets a point.

Version 2:

You can play for time, seeing how many completed throws each team

can make in one minute.

Version 3:

You can play for a number of tosses. See how fast each team can complete the set number of throws. ●

FENCE TOSS

A strong-man type challenge that is a great way to compete at the end of practice.

Skill Focus:

- Being explosive

Playing Level:

- 8U +

Materials / Equipment:

- Medicine balls of lighter weight (2-4 lbs)
- Basketball/soccer ball for the youngest players
- A fence or some sort of item to throw over

Time Commitment:

- 5+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- Most tosses over the fence and back wins
- Can play for a set period of time and most tosses over the fence wins

Game Description:

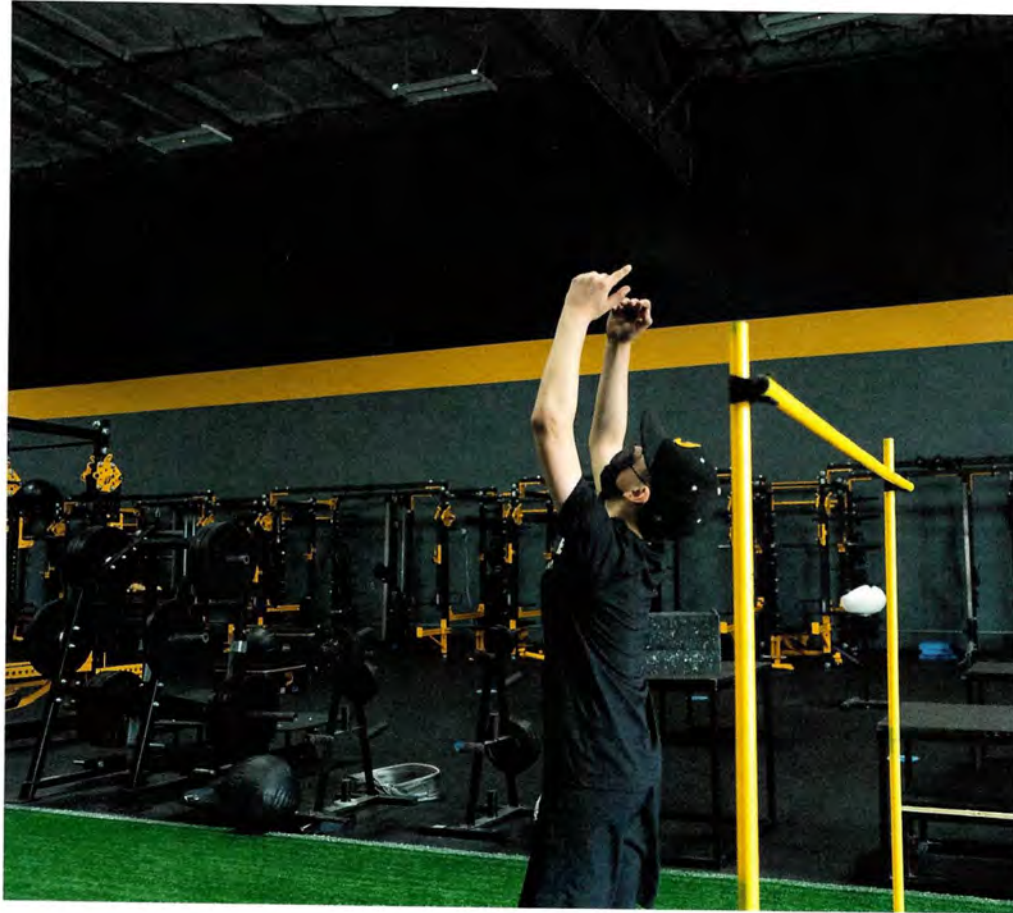
Start with one player at a time.

Player one is standing on one side of the fence next to a medicine ball.

Once the coach says 'go', player one picks up the medicine ball and throws it over the fence. They then run to the other side of the fence, pick up the medicine ball and toss it back over to the other side.

The player can't run to the other side of the fence until the ball crosses over the fence.

If you are using a fence, you can make it more challenging by making players start further away from the end of the fence so that they have further to run between tosses. ●



Pictured is a lower-sized target for an athlete of this size. Feel free to use the space you have and be creative. Athletes can throw over a chainlink fence. They can also see how high up they can throw against a wall or a high fence/wall if it is too high for them to throw over.

TAPS

A simple game to get players moving and ready for practice at the end of a dynamic warm-up.

Skill Focus:

- Being as athletic as possible while working on being explosive

Playing Level:

- 12U+

Materials / Equipment:

- Tennis ball, plyo ball or wiffle ball to throw towards the player
- An open space
- Can use a light medicine ball as well, but smaller, lighter balls work best

Time Commitment:

- 5+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- Last man standing wins

Game Description:

Group players into small groups of 4-5 and have them form a circle.

One player starts with the ball. That player throws the ball to any other player in the circle.

The player who is receiving the ball cannot touch the ground when holding the ball.

The player receiving the ball must jump, catch and toss the ball to a teammate while in the air.

If you make a bad (uncatchable) throw, drop a ball or touch the ground while holding the ball, you are out. ●



DON'T GO HUNGRY

A sprint game that lets players challenge their teammates and which can be done after a dynamic warm-up or at the end of practice. This one can get quite competitive!

Skill Focus:

- Short sprinting speed, being explosive

Playing Level:

- 12U+

Materials / Equipment:

- Tennis balls, plyo balls, or wiffle balls (something that won't hurt too bad if a player falls on it)
- Cones or other items to mark the starting lines
- An open space with no other obstacles in the way

Time Commitment:

- 5+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- Don't be the one without a ball

Game Description:

You'll want to split the team into two groups and have the groups spaced out facing each other.

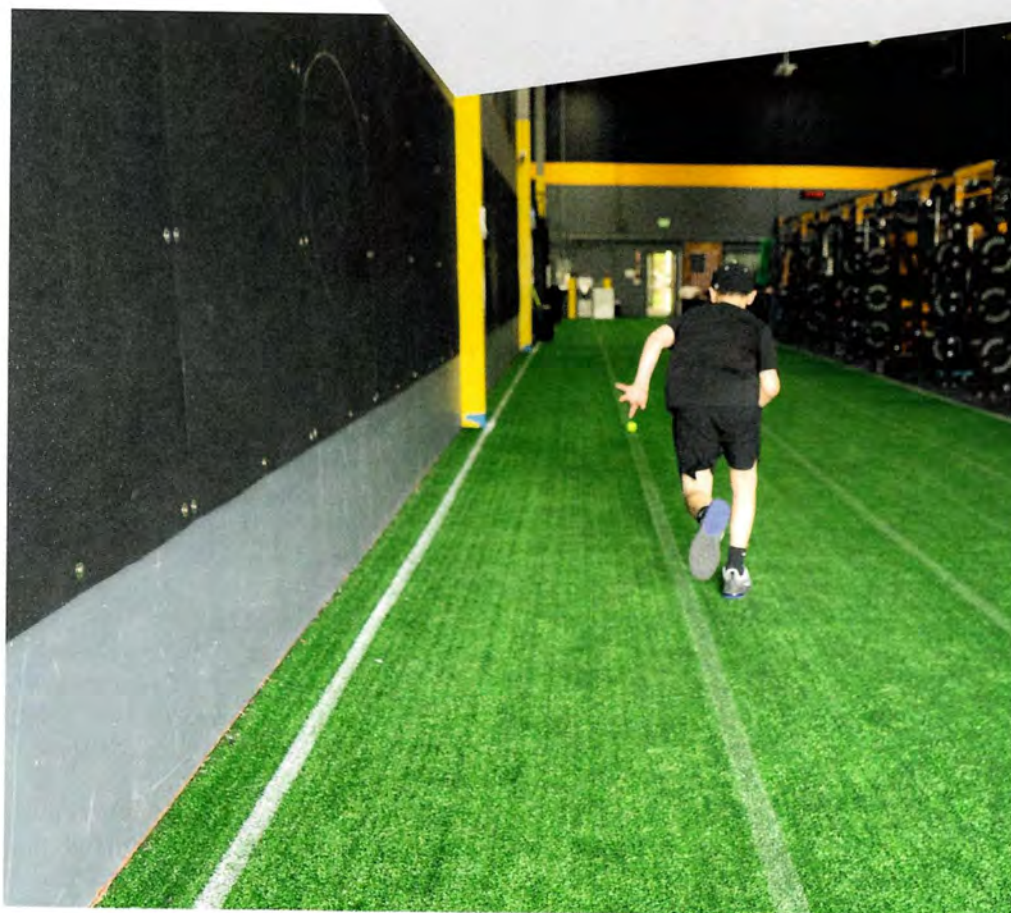
If the teams are lined up 15 feet apart, you will put the balls in between each group. You'll want to make sure the balls are placed an equal distance from each group.

You'll want to make sure you have one less ball in the middle than total players lined up at the starting line. So, if you have 8 players total—4 on each side—then have 7 balls in the middle.

Determine the number of players on each starting line. Once the coach says 'go', the players rush the middle to grab a ball. The player who ends up without a ball is out for the next round.

It is important to make sure they

SPRINTING GAMES



stay on their feet. This can get rough if kids start diving for the balls.

Version 2:

A coach can yell 'go' and simultaneously throw the balls for the players to chase instead of having the balls start on the ground. ●

CHASE THE RABBIT

An engaging sprint game that can be done after a dynamic warm-up or at the end of practice.

Skill Focus:

- Sprint speed and explosiveness

Playing Level:

- Any age level

Materials / Equipment:

- Towels or old t-shirts for the "tail" and an open running lane
- Cones, bats, baseball bags/ buckets or tape. Anything available to mark a 'starting' and 'finish' line. Could also use a base as a start and play in the baseline of a field.

Time Commitment:

- 10+ minutes

Game Goals:

- Either don't get caught or catch the person in front of you

Game Set Up:

A starting line is needed and can

be made with tape indoors or an item such as a bat indoors or outdoors. You will also need a finish line that can be marked with tape indoors or a bat indoors or outdoors.

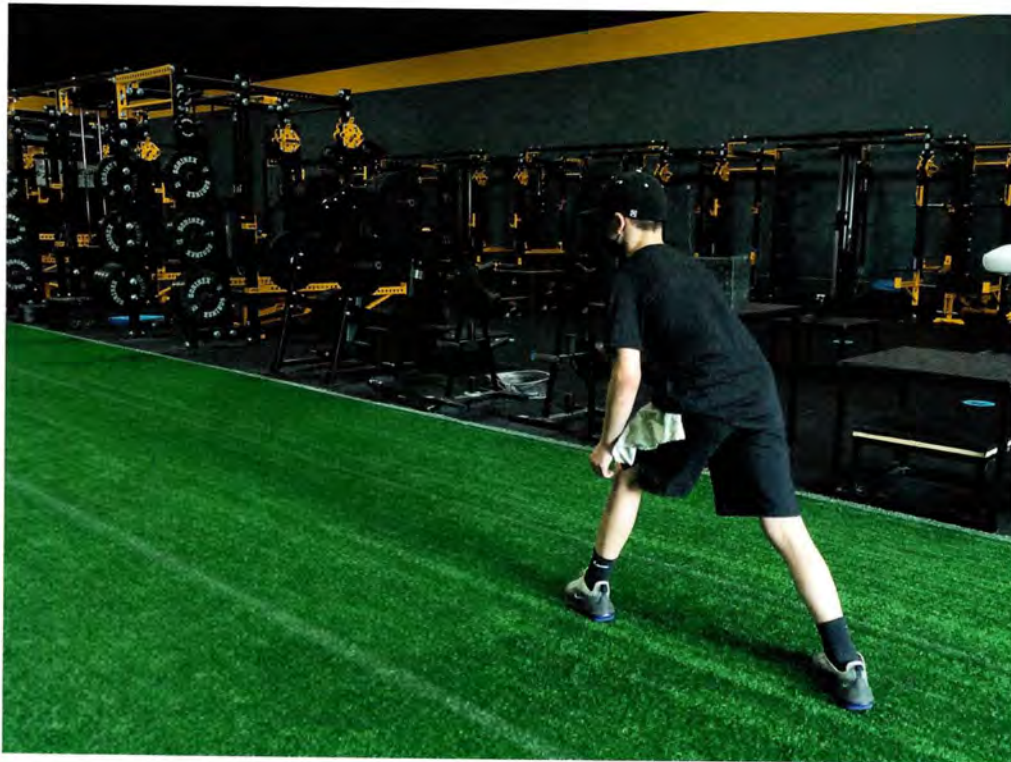
Distance to the finish line can be adjusted as the game goes on, but we would recommend starting with half a baseline (~25 feet) as the distance between the start and finish line.

Game Description:

Player one starts at the starting line and tucks one end of a flag or t-shirt inside the waistline of their pants or halfway into one of their pockets.

Player two starts a predetermined distance behind player one, usually 3-5 feet, but this can change based on the skill of the athletes who are paired up.

Once a coach says 'go', player one tries to reach the finish line before player two is able to 'catch' them by pulling out the flag or t-shirt. If player one crosses the finish line with the shirt/towel still tucked in,



Rags, old washcloths, cut-up t-shirts are all options that can be used for this game.

then they have won. If player two is able to pull out the shirt/towel, they win.

Version 2:

Player one starts on the ground on their back or belly. Once player one makes a first

move to get up or roll over, player two will give chase.

We recommend mixing up the matchups often. You can even do a bracket style competition to heighten the level of effort by your players. ●

TIC-TAC-TOE RELAY

A fun twist on a classic game to get sprint work in while communicating and challenging their teammates.

Skill Focus:

- Sprinting and critical thinking

Playing Level:

- 11U+

Materials / Equipment:

- Materials to make a tic-tac-toe grid, either tape inside or baseball bats
- Tennis balls/wiffle balls/plyos to use as the Xs and Os
- If short equipment, one team could use hats and another gloves as Xs and Os

Time Commitment:

- 10+ minutes

Game Goals:

This game serves two purposes. It both gets our players to spring quickly but also requires them to think critically about the situation in a fast-paced environment, just

like they will have to do in a live baseball game.

Game set up:

If inside a facility, you can use baseball bats or tape on the ground to make a tic-tac-toe board.

If outside, we recommend using baseball bats to set up the board.

If you split your team into four groups, you would need to create two grids.

Game Description:

Split the team into two groups (if you have a large team, you could split into four groups).

Assign one team an object and the other team a different object. This could be tennis balls, baseballs, plyos, gloves, hats—any object you have enough of.

Recommended objects: baseballs, plyos, gloves, hats

Example:

Team one is assigned hats. Player one on team one runs to the board and places their hat in a square



Feel free to be creative with the items used by each team! Baseball bats, tape on the turf, or even draw lines in the ground can act as the lines to play in.

then runs back.

Once the player crosses the line where the teams are lined up, player two (who is assigned baseballs) runs out and places the baseball in a square, then runs back.

Game continues until a draw or one team wins.

The team that wins gets a 'point'. The game can be played multiple times so the team with the most 'points' at the end wins.

To get more sprinting, you can set the 'starting line' further away from the tic-tac-toe board.

Version 2:

Players can carry medicine balls, but you will need 5-7 medicine balls and ways to distinguish different medicine balls. This can be done with tape or another marker on the ball.

If you don't have enough medicine balls, you can also play where each team has one medicine ball that they need to carry to the tic-tac-toe board and back. So, each team carries the medicine ball to the board, drops their hat (or another marker) on the board, then carries the medicine ball back to the starting line. ●

HURDLE HOP OBSTACLE

This allows coaches to be creative with what they have at their disposal. Have fun with it!

Skill Focus:

- Jumping, sprinting, squatting and being explosive

Playing Level:

- 12U+

Materials / Equipment:

- Shorter hurdles as well as tall track hurdles. You can vary this depending on the equipment you have available.

You can make your own hurdles, though caution is needed because certain plastics can break and injure a player.

Optional equipment:

- Stopwatch (can use timer on phone)
- Prowler
- Weights such as dumbbells or kettlebells that can be used for carries

Time Commitment:

- 15+ minutes

Game Goals:

Players move as athletically and quickly as possible. Coaches use the obstacles to put players in the athletic positions we want.

Game Set-Up:

Coach will need to set up hurdles and other obstacles, such as boxes, in a progression for players.



Shorter hurdles are to jump over, higher hurdles are to crawl under. Boxes can be used to jump on and over, or to jump around.

Game Description:

Verbally explain what the players need to do for each obstacle.

Have the players line up to go through the obstacle course one at a time.

Have players go through the obstacle course with a coach(s) grading whether a player did the course correctly. If they knock down an obstacle, they need to set it back up and complete it.

After going through once, you may time players as they go through again. You can track their times on a sheet or tell each player and have them remember their times.

If enough equipment is available, you can have two teams race one another.

Players love this game as it is both a competition and something that they don't get to do on an everyday basis. ●

HELICOPTER / POOL NOODLE

A very competitive and challenging game that younger athletes will be excited to play.

Skill Focus:

- Jumping and timing skills.

Playing Level:

- 12U and under

Materials / Equipment:

- **Version 1 Equipment:** Pool noodle
- **Version 2 Equipment:** PVC pipe, PVC pipe L attachment, pool noodle. PVC pipe makes it easier to swing around.

Time Commitment:

- 15+ minutes

Game Scoring:

- Be the last man standing and jump as high as you can.

Recommended Group Size:

5 players, but can be played with a full team if necessary

Game Description:

Players form a circle around the coach holding the pool noodle.

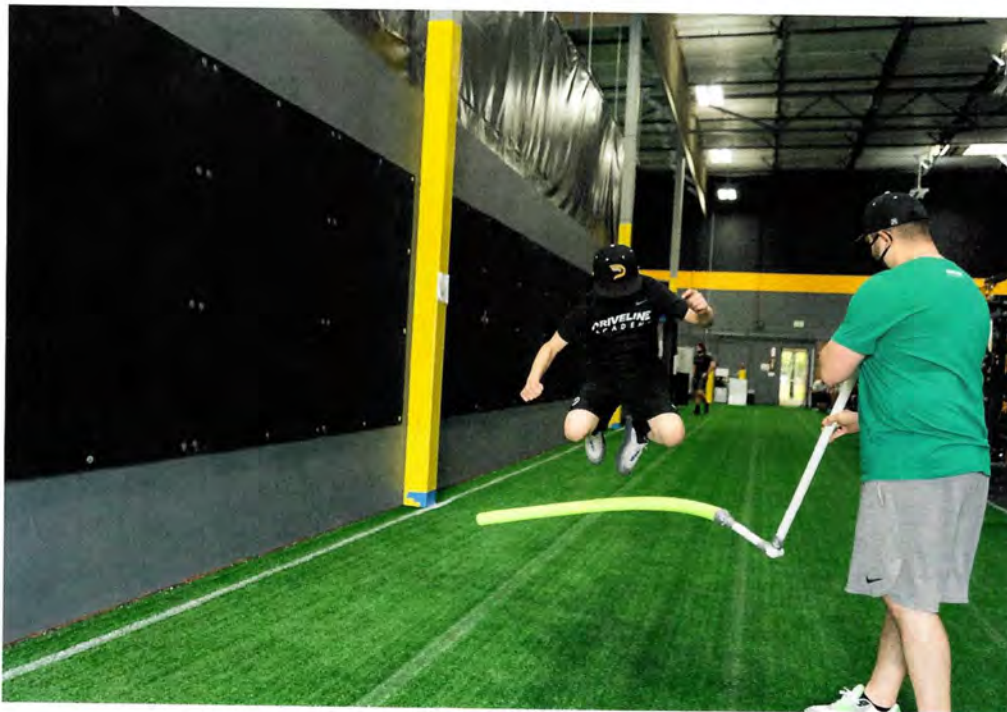
The coach 'drags' the noodle around in a circle while the players jump over it.

Once the noodle hits a player, they are 'out'.

Once a player is 'out', they stand outside the circle of players surrounding the coach.

Coaches may vary the speed, height and direction (by going clockwise or counterclockwise) to try to get the pool noodle to hit the players.

This game may be the number one choice of our players in the facility, and has really shown our players how to be explosive and jump as high as they can.



Pictured is a device we use for this game. It is a PVC pipe with an 'L' attachment attached to a shorter PVC pipe attached to a pool noodle.

Version 2:

Coaches may use a broomstick or pool noodle and can raise and lower it as they go around in a cir-

cle. Making the athletes jump over the barrier when it is lower and have the duck or get on the ground when it is in the air. ●

111

111