

EXAMPLE DRILLS FOR YOUR SEASON

➤ **DEFENSE WARM UP**

This is an excellent drill to start your defensive practice using every player on the team to warm up fielding & throwing. Start with 4 balls allowing for 4 overthrows. As we are trying to field the ball correctly we are also emphasizing accurate throws. If the 4th ball is overthrown the entire team will take a lap around the field (jogging) and the drill will start over. Set up a player up at 1st base and another player as backup. Set up a catcher at home. All other players are at 3rd base and everyone else is in line outside the foul line. Coach is at home plate with the 4 balls and a bat. Coach hits grounders to 3rd baseman who fields the ball; makes an accurate throw; follows her throw and becomes backup at 1st base; player playing 1st base after catching ball makes accurate throw home to catcher; then follows her throw and becomes catcher, catcher tosses ball to coach (catcher then goes to end of line at 3rd base) who hits to next player in line at 3rd base. After entire team completes fielding and throwing to from 3rd base; move to SS; then to 2nd then back to 3rd base and run bunt defense with a player at 2nd moving to 1st base for the catch; in other words, on the bunt defense you now have the 1st base backup playing 2nd base and 1st base as well as 3rd base are charging the bunt. After the play, the 1st base comes home to be catcher, 2nd base becomes 1st base, 3rd baseman moves to 2nd base and catcher gets in line at 3rd base.

➤ **BASE**

The runner is on the base in her ready position (ready for her lead off). Another player or coach is a short distance from her, in the base path from 1st to 2nd base. The coach holds a tennis ball at eye height. As the ball is dropped on a piece of wood, the runner leaves the base and attempts to catch the ball before it bounces off the wood a second time. The distance for this drill is determined by the skill level of the runners, but start out close so that she can easily catch the ball and slowly move back to challenge her.



➤ **OUT OF THE BOX**

This is similar to the base drill, but this time the runner is a batter. The dropper is lined up a short distance from home plate in the base path to 1st base.

Have the batter take a normal swing with a “bat” (use a fake bat, or top of a batting tee). As the “bat” enters the impact or contact zone, drop the tennis ball and have the batter run out of the batters box and catch the ball before it bounces on the wood a second time. Once again, start out at a short distance and increase the distance to challenge the batters.

NOTE: Make sure batters weight is balanced and not leaning forward or backward or she will take unnecessary steps to regain her balance before running for the ball. Also, watch the right arm and elbow (right handed batters). The proper movement is to drive the elbows back and outside the hip to initiate the running sequence. Finally, watch the “bat” to make sure she does not “whip” the bat back to the right side and then run. The “bat” should be dropped by the left hand after the right hand has released it.

This drill teaches two things. The first is to get out of the batters box quickly and with the least amount of steps and wasted movement. The second thing it teaches is to hit the ball and run. **NOT TO HIT THE BALL, ADMIRE YOUR HIT AND THEN SAUNTER TO FIRST BASE.**



➤ **SCRAMBELED EGGS**

GREAT DRILL FOR SLIDING

Have $\frac{1}{4}$ the team line up behind 1st base, have $\frac{1}{4}$ the team line up behind 2nd base, $\frac{1}{4}$ the team line up behind 3rd base, $\frac{1}{4}$ the team line up at home. You will need to have a dozen or so eggs (not hard boiled). Give 2 eggs (one for each hand) to the first person in line at home. She has to run to 1st base and slide, with her hands up so as not to break the eggs. The first player in line at 1st base gets the eggs from the runner and runs to 2nd base and slides. This continues until all the players have run and slid. (note: can use whiffle balls or tennis balls instead of eggs)

➤ **PICKLE**

Place 2 bases 40-60 ft. apart. Only 3 people are needed, one at each base and one to be the runner. Use tennis balls and bare hands to develop eye hand coordination and ball awareness.

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



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

➤ **BALLS OF THE FEET**

First you must realize the game of softball is played entirely on the balls of your feet, regardless of what position you play. There are only 2 times when your heels should hit the ground.

1. In between pitches when you are relaxing.
2. In the dugout in between innings.

To generate more speed you must realize the dynamics of running. If you are running with your heels hitting the ground first, you are actually pulling the ground towards you. This is not generating any speed. When you run on the balls of your feet and leaning forward, you are pushing the ground away from you and this generates power and speed.



One of the best drills to improve strength in your stride (running stride) is to do static jumps. This is done by stretching a length of rope between two people (hold the rope very loosely). Hold the rope about waist high and from a standing start, on the balls of your feet, jump over the rope. You may have to start out lower, but get to the point where you can jump over a rope at waist high, then add a second rope a couple of feet away from the first. Jump the first rope and when you hit the ground, immediately jump over the second. This will improve your speed the first day you do it. Every day after that, you will see more and more speed.

➤ **3 TEAM SCRIMMAGE**

Have a scrimmage that is made of 3 teams of 4. One team consists of the outfield, the second, the infield and the third team is up to bat. After the 3 outs, the outfield moves to the infield, the infield bats and the batters go to the outfield. Etc., etc.

➤ **BASE RUNNING GAME**

Time all your players from home plate to first base. Do this twice. Average each player's time. Pair up two closest times, placing one player at plate and one about ten feet behind. Have them race around all four bases. Do this for the entire team. We always go twice with the pairs switching their starting spots the second time.

END YOUR PRACTICE GAMES

Softball is not all total concentration or a constant onslaught of drills, drills and more drills. There is a time to have some fun and still learn or polish some skills. Use the end of practice for a fun game that can create some team bonding while still focusing on softball fundamentals.

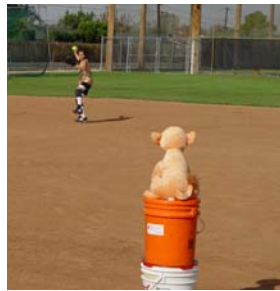
➤ **THUNDER BALL**

Divide your team into 2 teams. Team 1 splits half at 1st base and half at 3rd base they are the runners. Team 2 takes turns up to bat. Either hit off a tee, soft toss or coach pitch depending on the level of your players. The hitter hits the ball and runs around the bases touching as many as she can before both fielders touch the ball. The fielders can't leave their base until the ball is hit. They get points for each base they touch. Each girl hits and then the teams switch.



➤ **BARNEY BOP**

The tools needed are a sturdy chair or two buckets that stack, a large stuffed toy (I use Barney, hence the name) and preferably a backstop or net to place behind the target. Start by placing "Barney" in the chair and if needed, prop him up to get him about 3-4 feet off the ground and place the chair with Barney straddling 1st base. Place a net behind the chair. Now divide your team up into 2 groups and have them line up in 2 columns at the shortstop position. Have the 1st player from team 1 take the first play. Hit a grounder the player 1. She must cleanly field the ball and make a throw to 1st base trying to knock Barney out of the chair. If this is done, her team scores 1 point. Then the 1st player from team 2 takes the next play and does the same thing. Do this until all of the players have had at least one turn. You can move the players from shortstop to 2nd base and do the same game. You could also set players up out in the outfield and place the chair at 2nd base to teach a good throw to 2nd. Try to have some type of prize for the winning team, like not carrying the equipment or something like that.



➤ **3, 2, 1, RUN**

In this game, again divide the team up into 2 teams. One team is at bat and one team is lined up behind 3rd base. Take 3 balls and line them up at intervals of about 5-7 feet apart from 3rd base toward home plate. They should end about half way between 3rd base and home plate. The team at home is called team 1 and the ones on defense are team 2. Have the 1st player from team 2 stand on 3rd base with her glove while the 1st player from team 1 is at home plate. When the coach says, "Go", the defensive player must run to the 1st ball, pick it up and make a throw to a teammate standing at 2nd base (I have a bucket there to drop the balls into), then go to the 2nd ball and do the same thing and on to the 3rd ball. The player at home starts running at the sound of "Go" and runs to 1st base and on to 2nd. The object of this game is to throw all 3 balls to the defensive player at 2nd base before the offensive player gets there. This is a LOT harder than it sounds, but it teaches making fast, accurate throws while under pressure.

After all members of each team have had a turn, switch places. You may have to adjust the distance between balls to make it fair for each team.

➤ **THE NAME GAME**

Sit the girls in a circle. Give one girl a ball, have her give her name and tell something interesting about herself. She rolls the ball to someone on the team she does not know. That girl repeats the name of the girl who just rolled her the ball and then gives her name and tells something interesting about herself. This continues until every girl on the team has had a chance to share something about themselves.

➤ **TENNIS BALL CATCH**

Using a tennis ball, have the girls play catch trying to catch the tennis ball using their catching hand without their glove. A bean bag or a squishy ball will be easier for younger players. This is a great drill for catchers to work on their framing.



All of the above drills were found on www.eteamz.active.com for more practice & drill ideas visit this web site.