

Practice Plan - Machine Pitch: (1 hour 30 minute practice)

Practice #1

Date: _____ **Time:** _____

Team Roster: _____

to : entire team - warmup exercises (jumping jacks, leg stretches, arm circles, etc.)
(10 minutes) * this is done BEFORE team takes the field; players arrive 15 minutes early

to : entire team - throwing warm up; place 1/2 of team along 1st base foul line, with
(10 minutes) throwing partner 20 feet away; make 10 throws each, then back up 3 steps; make 10
throws each, then back up 3 steps; make 10 throws each, then back up 3 steps

to : Stations - Round One
(12 minutes)

Hitting	Throwing	Infield	Outfield
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

to : Stations - Round Two
(12 minutes)

Hitting	Throwing	Infield	Outfield
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

to : Stations - Round Three
(12 minutes)

Hitting	Throwing	Infield	Outfield
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

to : Stations - Round Four
(12 minutes)

Hitting	Throwing	Infield	Outfield
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

to : entire team lesson - base running, home to 1st base
(15 minutes)

to : entire team - wrap up: reenforce lessons learned, acknowledge "hard work"
(7 minutes)

****NOTE: plan allows 2 minutes to rotate players from one station to the next**

Practice #1 Details:

Warm up exercises: while you are stretching, explain the importance of warming up properly; Major League

players always stretch their muscles before practice or games

Hitting Station: set up a Tee for each player, hitting into a net or screen; make sure there is adequate separation between the players

Work on proper batting stance:

- feet should be about shoulder width apart, with weight on inside balls of feet
- feet should be square to home plate
- knees should be bent to comfort level
- grip on bat should be relaxed, in the fingers, not palm of hand
- elbows should be bent, relaxed
- shoulders square, eyes level, chin on or above front shoulder

Work on proper Swing:

- begin swing with short, soft stride with front foot remaining closed
- throw hands toward the ball, bringing bat through the hitting zone to strike the top half of the ball
- "whip" the bat head, turning hips at the same time (turn on the ball of back foot - squash the bug)
- keep eyes and head on the ball until contact
- balance is important throughout the swing and finish

Throwing Station: players should pair up, odd player throws to coach

- start with player facing target, feet shoulder width apart, glove side foot ahead of throwing side foot
- pivot on ball of throwing side foot and step with glove side foot toward target (point little toe at target)
- "scarecrow" position - reach back with throwing hand, elbow bent, wrist straight up with ball away from body; elbow on glove side pointing toward the target
- start throwing motion by pulling glove side elbow down as throwing arm moves forward (elbow still bent)
- throwing arm does not extend fully until ball reaches release point in front of body, wrist "snaps" as ball is released
- proper follow-through includes throwing hand continuing down to outside of glove side knee, bending forward at waist, and throwing side foot stepping toward the target

****NOTE:** make sure players reach back correctly "scarecrow"; watch for "pushing" the ball and correct

Infield Station: Ground Balls - work with players on infield dirt

- first, show players the proper position to field a ground ball: knees bent, weight forward on balls of feet, fingers of glove on ground at 45 degree angle, throwing hand ready to "trap" ball in glove
- second, show players how to "slide step" to get in front of ground ball, before getting into fielding position; let them practice "slide step" and "fielding position"
- third, hit ground balls to player, making sure they move in front of ball and field it correctly; do three to player and then rotate to next player; continue until time runs out

Outfield Station: Fly Balls - work with players in outfield grass; use small machine

- first, show players the proper glove position to field a fly ball: if the ball is below mid-thigh, then "thumbs down"; if the ball is above mid-thigh, then "thumbs up"
- second, show players fielding position for fly balls - glove side foot forward, glove up and to throwing hand side, always use two hands to catch ball
- third, shoot fly balls to player, making sure they move in front of ball and field it correctly; do three to player and then rotate to next player; continue until time runs out

Team Lesson: Base running, home to 1st base

- have the players line up behind home plate, and one at a time, take a pretend swing and then run to 1st base
- make sure the players run all the way through the bag at first base, break down, and turn right

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Practice #2

Date: _____ **Time:** _____

Team Roster: _____

to : entire team - warmup exercises (jumping jacks, leg stretches, arm circles, etc.)
(10 minutes) * this is done BEFORE team takes the field; players arrive 15 minutes early

to : entire team - throwing warm up; place 1/2 of team along 1st base foul line, with
(10 minutes) **throwing partner 20 feet away; make 10 throws each, then back up 3 steps; make 10**
throws each, then back up 3 steps; make 10 throws each, then back up 3 steps

to : Stations - Round One
(12 minutes)

Hitting	Throwing	Infield	Outfield
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

to : Stations - Round Two
(12 minutes)

Hitting	Throwing	Infield	Outfield
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

to : Stations - Round Three
(12 minutes)

Hitting	Throwing	Infield	Outfield
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

to : Stations - Round Four
(12 minutes)

Hitting	Throwing	Infield	Outfield
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

to : entire team lesson - base running, 1st base to 2nd and/or 3rd base
(15 minutes)

to : entire team - wrap up: reenforce lessons learned, acknowledge "hard work"
(7 minutes)

****NOTE: plan allows 2 minutes to rotate players from one station to the next**

Practice #2 Details:

Warm up exercises: while you are stretching, explain the importance of warming up properly; Major League players always stretch their muscles before practice or games

Hitting Station: set up a Tee for each player, hitting into a net or screen; make sure there is adequate separation between the players

Work on proper batting stance:

- feet should be about shoulder width apart, with weight on inside balls of feet
- feet should be square to home plate
- knees should be bent to comfort level
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- third, shoot fly balls to player, making sure they move in front of ball and field it correctly; do three to player and then rotate to next player; continue until time runs out

Team Lesson: Base running, 1st base to 2nd and/or 3rd base

- explain the role of Base Coaches; show the sign for "stop" and for "go"
- have the players line up behind 1st base, and one at a time, take a base runner position on 1st base; explain that they cannot leave the base until the pitched ball reaches home plate
- have the players run to 2nd base, and 3rd base coach give "stop" or "go" sign to continue to 3rd base

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Practice #3

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Team Roster: _____

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to : entire team - throwing warm up; place 1/2 of team along 1st base foul line, with
(15 minutes) throwing partner 20 feet away; make 10 throws each, then back up 3 steps; make 10
throws each, then back up 3 steps; make 10 throws each, then back up 3 steps

to : entire team lesson - explain how to get "outs" on defense; infield / outfield play
(15 minutes)

- explain 3 outs per half inning; a ball caught in the air is an out; a ground ball that is fielded and thrown to 1st base before the batter reaches 1st base is an out
- explain concept of "force play"
- place players at defensive positions, and hit balls to them; have infielders throw the ball to 1st base; have outfielders throw the ball to 2nd base

Team 1	Team 2
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

to : entire team lesson - practice game
(50 minutes)

- divide the team into 2 teams (decide breakdown in advance)
- put one team in the field, and one team batting
- each player on the batting team bats once, and then they go into the field
- each player on the this team bats once, and then they switch again; continue until time is up
- stop play as necessary to teach rules, but keep things moving
- remind players to use the skills they have practiced during the hitting, throwing, and fielding stations

to : entire team - wrap up: reenforce lessons learned, acknowledge "hard work"
(6 minutes)

****NOTE:** plan allows 2 minutes to rotate players from one station to the next

List of "Team Lessons" to teach at Machine Pitch practices:

Base Running:

1) Home to 1st Base

- explain the order of the bases: 1st base, 2nd base, 3rd base, home plate
- have the players line up behind home plate, and one at a time, take a pretend swing and then run to 1st base
- make sure the players run all the way through the bag at 1st base, break down, and turn right

2) From 1st to 3rd Base

- explain the role of base coaches; show the sign for "stop" and the sign for "go"
- have the players line up behind 1st base, and one at a time, take a base runner position on 1st base; explain that they cannot leave the base until the ball is hit by the batter
- have the player run to 2nd base, and 3rd base coach give the "stop" sign, or the "go" sign to continue on to 3rd base

3) Concept of "Force Play"

- explain that you cannot have more than one runner on any base
- there is a "force play" any time the base runner must run because there is another base runner coming to the base he/she is on
- if there is a "force play" at a base, you get the out by throwing the ball to that base before the base runner reaches the base
- if there is a runner on 1st base and the batter hits a ground ball, the runner on 1st base must run because the batter is running to 1st base; this means there is a "force play" at 2nd base
- if there are runners at 1st base and 2nd base, then there is a "force play" at 2nd base and 3rd base
- if there are runners at 1st base, 2nd base and 3rd base, then there is a "force play" at home plate, 3rd base and 2nd base
- there is always a "force play" at 1st base
- if there is a runner on 2nd base, but not at 1st base, then there is no "force play" because the runner at 2nd base does not have to run

4) Fly Ball with less than two outs

- a base runner must "tag up" before he/she can advance to the next base after a fly ball is caught in the air; this means the runner must go back to the base they were on and touch it with their foot after the ball is caught
- if the defensive player that catches the ball in the air can throw the ball to the base the runner was on before the runner "tags up", then the runner is out
- this means if there are less than two outs and the batter hits a fly ball, the base runner must stay close enough to the base he/she is on so that they can get back to the base safely if the ball is caught in the air
- if there are less than two outs and a runner on 3rd base and the batter hits a fly ball, the runner should stay on the base until the ball is caught or dropped; the runner can run to home plate as soon as the ball is touched by the fielder, and usually get there before the fielder can throw the ball to home plate
- if there are two outs and the batter hits a fly ball, the base runner can run because if the ball is caught in the air, that makes three outs and the inning is over

Defensive Play:

1) Always check to see if you can get the lead runner

- if there is a runner on 1st base and the batter hits a ground ball, it is better to get the runner out at 2nd base than to get the batter out at 1st base
- if possible, you want to get the runner closest to home plate because this makes it more difficult for the team batting to score a run
- if you are not sure you can get the lead runner, then take the sure out

2) Take the force play

- it is easier to make a force play than to tag a runner out, so if there are two outs it is better to throw the

batter out at 1st base than to try to tag out a runner a 3rd base