

Advanced Outfield Drills

Machine Fly Balls

Age Appropriate

Grouping 5, ages 10 to 15+

Objective

To allow players to work on catching more difficult fly balls

Setup

A bucket of balls, a pitching machine, a coach to feed the machine

Execution

A pitching machine can be a great asset to coaches who aren't comfortable hitting fly balls. Pitching machines can throw fly balls virtually as high as you want and to almost the same spot every time. Just be sure that your players are confident enough and capable enough to catch these balls. If you're unsure, use soft balls or tennis balls instead of baseballs. Don't ruin a player's confidence or create a potential injury situation because you want to make your practices more exciting.



Coaching Keys

In general, fly balls fed through a machine have a slightly different spin on them than do batted balls. The spin causes the balls to fall almost straight down to the ground once they reach their highest point. This can be tricky for young outfielders who are accustomed to trying to move back to the spot where the ball is going to land, so it's important that players have developed their skills enough to be able to perform this drill safely. One benefit of catching fly balls fed through a pitching machine is that players are usually forced to learn to catch the ball while moving forward, which is not an easy skill to teach or master.