

Minors Practice Plan

- Make sure you ask people to help you.
- The more people that help, the better off your team will be.

1st Practice:

- A) Introductions whole team – players and coaches
- B) Set expectations with players
 - a) Respect fellow players
 - b) Respect coaches and parents
- C) Head coach meet with parents to set expectation level for games/practices
 - a) Communication
- D) Warm Up:
 - a) Jogging/Running/Stretching
 - b) Throwing:
 - i) Players paired up on foul line, in outfield or on blacktop
 - ii) Start on one knee and work on ball flicks with no glove (wrist action)
 - iii) Move to standing stationary, sideways, legs spread, focus on take-away (equal opposite OR Flex 'T') and follow through
 - iv) Increase distance and introduce a stride to the throw. Monitor mechanics and work with individuals that need help (check player grip on baseball, 4-seam vs. 2-seam)
- E) Group Work (split players into two groups):
 - a) Infield Group
 - i) Ground Balls at 2B from Coach on bucket behind pitcher mound
 - ii) Throws go to 1B (Coach at 1B with bucket for balls)
 - iii) Work on fielding mechanics, footwork and throws
 - iv) Discuss positioning (alignment of player in regards to 2B/1B)
 - b) Outfield Group
 - i) Start with catching the ball at highest point on a short, tossed, fly ball
 - (1) No Basket catches
 - ii) Gradually increase distance between fielder and coach
 - iii) Eventually include a cutoff to receive the throw from fielder
 - c) Both groups should last 15-20 minutes – drinks in between if needed
- F) Work on base running
 - a) Home to 1B
 - i) Running through the bag and turning to foul territory
 - b) Home to 2B
 - i) How to round the bag at 1B
- G) Review rules of the game
 - a) Just because YOU know the rules that doesn't mean the players know them
 - i) How to record an OUT
 - (1) Tagging vs. Force Out, when is there a force out and when is a tag required
 - ii) Foul Ball vs. Fair Ball
 - (1) Is a batted ball that hits home plate a fair or foul ball?

2nd Practice: Same as 1st Practice

Players will want to HIT but they will need far more work in Fielding/Throwing/Catching

- A) Warm Up
 - a) Introduce some drills
 - i) Relay throwing - Teach how to receive the ball and then deliver it to the next fielder
- B) Group Work
 - a) Infield Group:
 - i) Graduate to players at 2B and SS and have the coach bat balls from in front of home plate
 - ii) Work in having the second baseman cover 2B when balls are hit to the SS and SS cover 2B when balls are hit to the second baseman.
 - b) Outfield Group:
 - i) Introduce drop-step to track and catch balls over their heads.
- C) Base Running
 - a) Introduce sliding.
 - i) Use Cardboard, on a slope. Toes Up.
 - b) Work sliding into 2B as part of base running
- D) Rules/General Game Information
 - a) Positions on the field - where does each position play, generally
 - b) How to cover bags
 - c) How to tag out a sliding runner

3rd Practice: Introduce Hitting and Pitching/Catching work

A) Warm Up

- a) Always start practice the same way, then the players know what is expected of them when they arrive. They won't be standing around or goofing off.

B) Hitting

- a) Cover the basics with the full team
 - i) Proper grip of the bat
 - ii) Alignment to plate / Stance in Batter's Box
 - iii) General Swing mechanics (Load, Drive Knob-to-Ball, Finish/Follow through)
 - iv) Bunting - Proper technique
- b) Group Work (Three Groups)
 - i) Tee Work - Have a tee to use for hitting into the side of a batting cage or into a Net.
 - ii) Bunting - off to the side, coach can soft toss to bunters. Teach proper technique
 - iii) Live Hitting - Either in Batting Cage or on Field. Coach pitch to hitters. Hitters should bunt 3-4 to start to get a feel for bunting down the foul lines, then 5-6 swings and switch.

C) Pitching / Catching

- a) Talk to whole team about pitching mechanics and the importance of catching and catching fundamentals
- b) Find out who actually wants to catch
- c) Discuss different grips of the baseball (4-seam, 2-seam, Palmball [a lot of kids this age will grip the ball in their palm, which is ok since they are small, but teach them that this is essentially a change up])
- d) Coach should work with 2 players at a time for Pitching/Catching. Do this during other Group work.
 - i) One Player pitches to a coach catching and gets instruction, while the other player works on towel drills while waiting to pitch.
 - ii) Working with catchers can be done two at a time. Work on the following:
 - (1) Proper squat technique
 - (2) How to receive the ball
 - (3) Throwing hand placement
 - (4) Drop and Block technique
 - (5) Footwork for throwing to bases

D) Infield / Outfield Group work

- a) Run through Infield/Outfield group work while at the same time working 1 player from each group on either pitching or catching

E) Base Running

- a) Introduce Coaches Signals, teach players to look for signs
- b) Teach how to properly leave the bag when the ball crosses home plate on a steal, don't leave early.

4th Practice: Continue to expand on the groundwork that has been laid

- A) Warm Up
 - a) During throwing introduce footwork, shuffle step and crow hop throws
- B) Infield / Outfield Groups
 - a) Work with Infielders at every position
 - b) Middle Infield, who covers the bag on a ball hit to the outfield
 - c) Have a coach at 1B teaching fielders how to properly take a throw at 1B, how/when to stretch for the throw, where to stand on the bag so they don't get hit by the batter/runner
 - d) Have outfielders throw to 2B/3B/Home with cutoffs from each outfield position
 - e) Backing up plays/throws. Review that every position player has a job on every play.
- C) Hitting
 - a) Work with batters on looking for signs from the Third Base Coach
- D) Pitching / Catching
 - a) Work in pitchers or catchers during other group work
 - b) Focus on proper mechanics
- E) Base Running
 - a) Sliding always needs work
 - b) 2B to Home, teach to look for 3B Coach

Moving on to further practices the basic structure of practice should remain the same. As practices move on efficiency will increase and you'll be able to do more within the time frame of one practice. Additional items that can be introduced / reviewed as practices continue:

1. Situational Plays
 - a. Run Downs
 - b. Defensive Bunt Rotation, who fields the ball and who covers bases
 - c. Defensive Base coverage in general...what does the pitcher do when the ball is in play?
2. Bench activities during a game
 - a. Bench players before an inning need to warm up the left/right fielder depending on home/away
 - b. Appropriate conduct during a game
 - i. Cheering on our teammates - YES
 - ii. Cheering while the opposing pitcher is in their windup - NO
 - iii. Throwing bats or gear - NO

Remember, this practice plan is a guideline. There are lots of great drills that can be done with the kids that will help them learn and develop baseball skills.

- You may have to work a lot on proper throwing form, or the way to field, or how to hit, pitch etc.
- If you need help running a practice and I am free, please ask!

At no time should anyone have a scrimmage with another team or do an inter-squad scrimmage. There are plenty of games during the year and there are a lot of things to work on in preseason and in-season practice.