

## Clinic Plan: Fielding Tune-Up

**Time:** 1.5 hrs

**Participants:** up to 30

**Equipment:**

10 cones

2 buckets of balls

Tennis balls (provided)

### Goals

- Return to softball movements;
- Calibrate hand-eye coordination;
- Gain confidence with throwing and fielding skills
- Refresh tactics and situational responses.

### Warm-Up (15 minutes):

1. 3-4 minutes of slow jogging, one lap of field or to a destination and back
2. 5 minutes of dynamic stretches, including:
  1. Shoulder and arm: arm circles, 90 degree shoulder rotations (see pic 1)
  2. Legs: walking leg swings ("Frankensteins"), hip openers/closers, walking on toes, walking on heels
3. Lunges with upright twists (see pic 2), trunk rotations while reaching to the ground (see pic 3)
3. 5 minutes of footwork focusing on common movements.
  - **Shuffle-shuffle-go:** line up on grass facing into field of play. Coach gives verbal cues of "pitch" and "go" to practice taking a base on a ball past the catcher.
    - On "pitch", runners take big shuffles to their right
    - On "go", runners turn and run as though stealing second base

### Teaching points:

- Shuffling keeps the eyes toward the play and lets you see where the ball is - you know best if you can go or not
  - Maintain momentum rather than stopping once completing the initial leadoff
- Pivoting from moving laterally to forward is very common in softball. The more practice we have at changing directions, the easier it will be to prevent our feet from getting tangled.

2. **Arc/serpentine run:** cones in an S shape. Group runs in single file there and back.

- Runners practice “leaning” in direction of turn while maintaining speed
  - Aim for 50% effort first run, 90% effort second

Teaching points:

- Relevant to baserunning and tracking fly balls
- Arms are pumping – in game, the glove stays down while you run to the spot you think the ball will fall
- Eyes looking ahead so direction/terrain changes aren’t a surprise
- Feel the tilt coming into and out of apex of turn (see pic 4)

**Throwing (5 minutes):**

1. Pairs throw together

a. Start close and soft, then move back to about length of baseline (60 ft)

**Remind:** we are just finding our release point – keep intensity low. Lots of throwing to come!

**Fielding Skills (40 minutes):**

- Break group in half (if needed for size and reps)
- Send one half to outfield with one leader and the other to infield with another leader, splitting support people evenly
- 20 minutes and switch

Group 1 Outfield:

1. Check outfield fundamentals (~2 mins)

· What does a safe, effective catch look like? Ask for demo and give constructive feedback or demo yourself.

- Call it! “Ball”, “mine”, “help” or your name. Avoids collisions and ensures someone is going for it.
- Run to the spot pumping arms, then two hands up toward the ball, elbows soft, “basket” of the glove facing the ball, always secure with second hand.
- Ball in the air? First step back, then adjust. It’s easier to run forward.
- Ball on the ground? Think about coming “around” the ball with your glove on the ground to prevent it from getting by (see pic 5)
- Get the ball into the cut-off or target base ASAP (two steps, throw)

**Remind:** Try to stay in the path of the ball – the glove will protect you! Way harder to triangulate the ball when it’s off to the side.

## 2. Coverage Fundamentals (10 mins)

- Set up mini diamond in outfield using a ball for each base (~10 foot baselines) and walk through with group split between outfield positions
- Review coverages when ball is hit to infield with/without runners on
  - If no runners, RF covering for overthrow of 1B
  - If runner on 1B
  - RF covering for overthrow of 1B
  - CF covering for overthrow of 2B
  - LF covering behind 3B in case of runner taking extra base

### Teaching points

- If a runner could take that base or there is someone there already, come in to cover as play develops.
- Position your body to account for where the ball could come from
  - On the fence side of 1B if throw coming from SS/3B
  - Straight behind 2B if throw coming from catcher

## 3. Drill: Catch on the run (<5 mins or 2 times through)

- Demo by leaders first
- Two groups lined up at the foul line facing fair territory (each line has a leader and every person in the line has a ball that they carry with them)
- One at a time, athlete runs out at an arc to catch a ball lobbed by instructor
- Secure ball with two hands, quickly stop and mime throwing in to cutoff.

**Remind:** Run to the spot you think the ball will fall, then adjust. Running with the flight of the ball means you'll be late.

## 4. Drill: Two lines, communication and fielding practice (~10 mins)

- Two lines in outfield – assign one as CF, the other as LF or RF
- Hit a mix of grounders and flies between the lines
  - Pair at the front breaks for the ball and communicates between themselves to establish who is going for it and who is backing up
  - CF side is the leader, takes priority if they call for the ball
  - Whoever doesn't call the ball backs up fielder going for it
  - Circle behind them, ready to retrieve the ball if it gets through

**Remind:** This process happens every single time a ball is hit – put your name on it and go after it with confidence!

### Teaching points:

- Communicate early and often
- “Square up” to the ball (i.e. try to meet it straight on, in line with your body)
- Pump arms while running, then raise glove as ball arrives (it helps to run faster)
- Two hands to secure the ball
- Once secured, quickly in to cut/base with a low throw (no rainbows!) Group 2

Infield:

1. Check infield fundamentals (~2 mins)

- a. What does safe, effective fielding look like? Ask for demo and give constructive feedback or demo yourself.
- b. Call it loud and early, just like the outfield! “Ball”, “mine”, “help” or your name.
- c. Ready position recap: knees bent, body low, glove low (not in front of chest or face).
- d. Aim to play ground balls in front of the body; run to the spot of fly balls; always use two hands.
- e. Between batters/plays: always answer in your mind “what do I do if the ball comes to me”.

2. Coverage fundamentals (or, what do I do when the ball is hit to someone else?) (10 mins)

- a. Review coverages when ball is hit and/or with runners stealing, i.e. i. Runner on 1, slow hit toward 1B

- 2B covers bag so 1B can go for the ball

- ii. Runner on 1, steal attempt

- SS receives throw at 2

- iii. Runner on 2, steal attempt

- 3B receives throw at 3 (SS covers behind)

- iv. Ball hit to outfield, runners advancing

- 1B to pitcher’s mound

- 2B/SS to cutoff or 2 (communication needed)

- 3B to 3

- P to back up 3 or home

3. Drill: Glovework (Dailies) (5 mins)

- a. In pairs kneeling ~6ft apart, roll the ball to each other with good pace

- i. Straight on

- ii. Backhand side

- iii. Forehand side

- b. In ready position, short hop the ball to each other

- i. Straight on

ii. Backhand side

iii. Forehand side

**Remind:** bare hand close by, glove moving into the ball/away from body.

4. Drill: Infield practice (10 mins)

a. 1-2 players per infield position (rotate)

b. 3 balls per player around the diamond, throwing to 1

i. Ensure players are rotating if more than one per position

ii. Practice grounders, choppers, slow rollers

iii. Can ask participants where they like to play - likely not enough time to have everyone get work at every position

iv. If time permits, practice flip/underhand plays at 2

**Remind:** Finish fielding the ball before trying to throw; set the feet.