



# Peninsula Youth Softball Association

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## PYSA Coaches Clinic Information Basic Fundamentals and Drills Guide



This document was developed by PYSA's professional coaches, Marcus and Dewey Fleet.

## THROWING

(Examples are based on right handed players, therefore anything here will be opposite for left handed players)

**Grip:** Grab the softball using the "C" seams ("C" can be forward or backwards). Fingers should be on top of the "C", thumb will be underneath.

**Footwork:** Inside part of right foot faces target. Left foot steps towards target with both feet facing the same direction. As left foot steps to target hands begin to separate. Separation: Glove or elbow of the left arm points towards target as throwing arm goes back. (Glove elbow and throwing elbow should be level.)

**Throwing motion:** Throwing arm comes forward with elbow staying even or above the shoulder as glove arm tucks into the body. Use wrist snap to allow the ball to come off of the fingers rather than push with the palm of the hand. As the arm comes through the body will naturally rotate. Follow through towards target while releasing the right leg off of the ground.

### DRILLS

1. **Wrist snaps:** Right knee on ground, left knee up facing target. Find grip. Hold throwing arm up (as if throwing darts), hand behind the ball. Work on wrist snap and backspin of seams. Wrist snaps are beneficial so players do not get in the bad habit of pushing their throws. A good snap not only improves the velocity of the throw, it also ensures that the ball comes off the fingers with consistency which will make throws more accurate.
2. **Break down throwing:** Grip, instep, footwork with separation, then finish the throw. Have the players stop at each of these steps as you correct them. It is important to be able to break down at each part so they understand their body position, but also to work on their balance. Many problems occur simply by losing balance at some point in a throw.
3. **Long toss:** (Setup longer than the length of the bases) Work on keeping the ball flight flat. "One hopping" their partner is better than the "rainbow" throw. Players should start using more of their lower half to throw at this distance, pushing off of back leg and covering more ground as they finish towards their target. Introducing a "crow hop" which really utilizes the legs will make players not rely solely on their



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arm, and longer throws will become easier. Long toss is vital for outfielders. Fast feet/quick throws: (Short distance- approximately 15ft apart) Player receiving the ball sets up with both hands directly in front of their chest as a target. Player will then step with left foot towards the ball as it is being caught. Feet should be set as quickly as possible. When ball is received, ball will transfer from glove to hand and then released as quickly as possible. This drill is important in building quick hands, quick feet, as well as a fast transfer which is crucial to solid infield play. (Although they are going fast, make sure they are balanced and in control. Also, because of the short distance between throwing partners, the throws should be considerate--do not allow them to throw the ball too hard at one another.)

## FIELDING

### CATCHING

Balls above the waist will be caught with fingers of the glove pointing up while balls below the waist will have the fingers pointing down. Glove will also be manipulated depending on which side of the body the ball will be received. A ball above the waist on the glove side will be caught with thumb pointing up. If the ball is coming to the players chest or on the throwing arm side, the ball will be caught with the thumb rotating over so it's horizontal. A ball below the waist at the player or on the glove side will be caught with thumb and fingers pointing down. If there is a low throw on the throwing arm side the glove will have to be turned over to backhand the ball. Whenever possible, using two hands is beneficial. Bare hand should be on the side of the glove, not directly behind it. Coaches should teach their players to catch the ball out in front of their body. The correct place to catch a ball is in the pocket of the glove, which is right in the center. Players will have more room for error if they really focus on catching everything in the center of their glove, as opposed to catching balls in the webbing of a glove.

### DRILLS:

1. **Playing catch:** There is no substitute for simply playing catch. Especially for the younger age groups, it is so important to get good at this basic skill. Learning to maneuver the glove based on the speed and direction of the ball being thrown is the framework for solid fielding.
2. **Catching on a bucket:** Most players favor catching the ball a certain way or on a particular side and will move their body so they can catch it that way all the time. However, just by sitting and having limited mobility they have to rely on maneuvering their glove to catch the ball. This drill can start up close using underhand throws and as skill increases, so does distance and speed of throw.



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3. **Bare hand:** Good for basic hand-eye coordination and using two hands. Sometimes the problem with a glove is that players rely on it too much and become lazy. This drill works well to promote using two hands and really focusing on the ball as it is coming to you. (Using a tennis ball or something soft works well so it doesn't hurt their hands.)

### INFIELD

**Ready position before ball is pitched (Prep-step):** Glove out and relaxed, standing upright, knees slightly bent. As pitcher starts her motion fielder takes three steps beginning with her glove side foot. This is called "walking into the pitch." First step is forward, second step widens out their stance, third step evens out their feet. Fielder will lower with each step allowing to get into their fielding position.

**Fielding position:** Feet slightly wider than shoulders, seated position, glove in front. Weight will be on the balls of the feet. (Not on heels!)

**Fielding a basic ground ball:** When ball is hit player will center up their body to the ball. Field the ball with two hands out in front of body with head down. Move forward through the ball with glove foot forward, then repeat instep, glove and throwing arm separation, and finish the throw.

\*\*Having a sense of urgency: Speed of ball hit will determine how quickly you will need to get rid of the ball.

### DRILLS:

1. **Lateral movement:** This drill will be set up with two groups, one on the shortstop side and the other on the second base side. Each player will field ground balls to their left and right continuously working on quick feet and staying low to change directions. You can start by rolling balls by hand and when they get better you can hit them with more pace. Players will go through one at a time getting anywhere from 4-6 ground balls. This drill should move quickly so once they catch a ball, another one should be already sent in the other direction. The faster the player moves the better, and diving should occur when necessary.
2. **Short hops:** A short hop is a ball that bounces right in front of the player. In this drill players can pair up, standing about 10 ft. apart. They will underhand throw short hops to each other, working on catching the ball or at least keeping it in front of them. Coaches can also throw short hops to players if it is quicker and more efficient. Proper fielding technique on a short hop is knees bent, hands out in front, eyes on the ball, and always keep the glove moving forward through the ball. The tendency is that players want to lift up and the ball goes underneath them, so keeping the head and body down is important. Once players become comfortable



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with short hops they will not only be better with basic ground balls but will also be able to keep bad throws in front of them so base runners can't advance in games.

3. **Rapid fire:** In this drill you will need fielders at 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and shortstop (pitcher is optional depending on if you want them to get some fielding practice but you don't need a catcher). The coach will proceed in hitting an entire bucket of ground balls randomly all over the infield as quickly as possible without stopping. Because they don't know where the ball will be hit players are on their toes ready to move. They will field the ball quickly and toss it behind them and get back into their position immediately so they're ready for the next ball. It's constant movement with no breaks. The goal is to not let anything get through the infield so diving is necessary. It's a high paced drill that promotes quickness and agility.
4. **Individual rapid fire with runners:** One fielder goes to their primary infield position. One coach hitting and another coach playing 1st base. All other players have helmets on and are running from home to first (make sure they run hard but don't leave early so it is realistic for the fielder). The position player has to make a play to first base on every runner in line at rapid fire pace. The single fielder will field then throw and sprint back to their original position without stopping. Different types of ground balls to the fielder is beneficial (movement left and right, slow hit balls that they have to charge, bunts, choppers, etc.). If the fielder is a 1st basemen, line up all runners line up at 3rd base and have the play be at home plate, instead of 1st base. It will end up being 10 or 11 ground balls for every fielder. Rotate until every player fields. This drill is very much fielding and conditioning combined--the runners get some sprints in, and it's exhausting fielding consecutive balls in this format. This drill is great for footwork and accurate throws, and because it's rapid fire the drill shouldn't take very long.
5. **Flips:** Very easy but important. On a short throw the underhand flip is easier, quicker, and more accurate then having to set the feet for a full throw. The situations to practice are; ground balls hit close to 1st base where the pitcher or 2nd basemen fields the ball, stays low and makes that quick flip to first, catchers getting to a passed ball and giving an accurate flip to the pitcher covering home, and middle infielders getting comfortable communicating with each other by saying "flip" to each other when getting the force play at second. When players flip the ball to each other the most important things are; staying low, keeping the arm motion short and towards the target, and following the flip with the body weight continuing towards the target.
6. **Bunt coverages:** Coaches can simulate bunts to work on defensive coverages in different situations. These scenarios include; number of outs, where the base runners are located, and where to make the out. There isn't a set way of covering bunts as it can vary with each team, but it is important that all bases are covered and



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players/coaches are on the same page. Therefore, when a bunt does occur in a game they are prepared to react correctly.

- 7. Rundowns (pickles):** Setup the situation where a base runner is caught in the middle with multiple fielders on either side trying to get the runner out. When doing this drill, the fewer throws made to get the runner out, the better. Plays on the base runner should always be in attempt to push the runner back to the previous base. If the base runner is advancing towards the next base, fielders should get the ball out early and error on the side of caution. "Throwing lanes" have to be established so fielders aren't throwing over the base runner. The person receiving the throw should always be on the throwing arm side of their teammate with the ball. Rundowns occur in games frequently so if fielders can complete a rundown consistently, a lot of important outs can be made.

## OUTFIELD

**Ready position before ball is pitched:** Glove out and relaxed, standing upright, knees slightly bent.

**Ground ball:** Ground ball in the outfield will be fielded the same as in the infield unless no one is on base, then ball will be fielded with a knee down. This will ensure that the ball will stay in front. \*\*As outfield play progresses ball will be fielded on the run outside of the glove foot to setup for a stronger throw.

**Fly ball:** "Judging" the ball means the player needs to quickly determine if the ball is going to land in front, behind, left, right, or directly at them. In most cases player will need to get behind the spot at which the ball will land and catch while moving through the ball towards the infield. Ball should be caught overhead with two hands, without glove blocking eyesight to the ball. A drop-step will be used when ball is behind the player. (No backpedaling!)

### DRILLS:

- 1. Moving through the ball:** Set players in centerfield, coach is near second base. Coach will toss ball up and player will catch ball while moving towards home plate. Have a catcher at home plate ready for the throw from centerfield. This drill teaches players that it is much easier to make a strong throw from the outfield if their momentum is going in the direction they are trying to throw. Catching a ball flat footed is a bad habit that will result in weak inaccurate throws.



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- Drop step:** This drill can occur in either the infield or outfield. Have the player setup in ready position with coach ready to throw a fly ball over their left or right shoulder. If the ball is thrown over the players left shoulder, they will drop step with their left foot, turning their body to run and get behind the ball. If the ball is over the right shoulder, the player will drop step with their right foot. This drill reinforces the good habit of drop stepping so a player can turn and run, as opposed to the “backpedal” method which is much slower but also causes players to lose their balance and fall backwards.
- Angles:** Proper angle to the ball is important for outfielders because they have so much territory to cover. Coaches can hit balls in the gaps of the outfield and fielders will judge what angle they have to take. On harder hit balls they will have to angle back, softer ones they will angle in. Many times outfielders will just go straight across and balls will get passed them. On a ball hit between players, both should move to the ball; one will field, the other will backup.
- Football drill:** Have players in a line each with a ball. Player will hand the ball to the coach who will be like the quarterback in this drill. The objective is to get players comfortable running and catching balls over either shoulder. They will start with short throws that are flat and progress to longer ones that are more like fly balls. Many players want to stop their feet and reach to catch fly balls. This drill will teach them to continue moving and catch the ball on the run. Also, players will learn how to angle their glove based on which shoulder the ball is coming over.
- Hitting the cut:** Coach will use a full infield and outfield in this drill. Both ground balls and fly balls will be hit to the outfielders who will work on fielding it and making a strong accurate throw to the cutoff, which primarily will be the middle infielders (shortstop and second basemen). Balls from left field will be taken by the shortstop. Balls in right field go in to the second basemen. From centerfield it can go to either, but usually the shortstop will handle this ball. The outfielder should keep their throw flat and to the chest of the cutoff. Balls from the outfield should never be thrown directly to the pitcher. It always goes from outfield to the closest infielder and then to the pitcher. In games it is very important that the ball can get from the outfield to the infield without mistakes, because errant throws allows for base runners to take extra bases.



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### (Catcher Position)

The catcher has 3 setup positions before receiving a pitch:

**Signal calling:** The catcher will always setup in this position first to give signs to the pitcher. In this setup the feet will be a little closer together as well as the knees so when the signs are given the opposing teams 1st and 3rd base coaches should not be able to see them. Glove will rest comfortably over the knee. Signs will be given at the same level as the knees, but back towards the body so they are properly protected. If hand signals are given too low to the ground they will be visible by the other team and signs can be stolen.

**Primary:** This position will be used when the catcher does not have to worry about throwing out a possible base stealer. After signs have been given to the pitcher, the catcher will setup in primary position. The feet will be slightly wider than the shoulders. Instead of the toes pointing towards the pitcher, the feet will flare out which will help the catcher balance and also allows them to sit down for a lower target. Glove will be setup in the center of the chest protector, comfortably out in front. The throwing hand will be to the side or behind the back so it is protected from being hit.

**Secondary:** This position will be used when a catcher has to be ready to throw out a possible base stealer. Signs will be given first and then they the catcher will get into secondary position. Feet will be a little wider then primary, but the main difference is that the catcher will not sit down as low. Setup will be a little higher so they will have a quicker way to get up and make a strong throw. The throwing hand will be positioned directly behind the glove but not touching it, to ensure that the catcher can make a quick transfer and release. Secondary takes more leg strength to hold than primary, so aspiring catchers should practice getting into this position and maintaining this position.

#### Drills:

1. **Quick release:** A catcher must have quick feet and a short throw because they have less time than any other position on the field. Set the catcher in secondary and underhand throw them balls so they can work on receiving the ball, setting their feet to throw, transferring the ball from glove to hand, and throwing from right behind their ear all in one quick motion. Ideally this is done as fast as possible while still maintaining balance and control throughout the entire process.
2. **Blocking:** The coach can simulate balls in the dirt so the catcher can work on blocking the ball. When blocking, glove goes down to the ground first and body follows with a quick drop to the knees. Knees will drop to replace where the feet were set. The body should be leaned forward so the chest protector is angled



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down and the chin should tuck so the throat is protected. It is important for catchers to know that when blocking they are not trying to catch the ball, they are basically making a wall with their body utilizing their chest protector as much as possible to keep the ball in front of them. Glove always stays down so the ball cannot go between the legs with the throwing hand directly behind the glove. Coaches can also throw pitches to the sides so catchers can work on getting around the ball so the body is always angled towards home plate.

- 3. Receiving/Framing:** Coach or teammate can pitch to the catcher so they can work on receiving. If it is in the strike zone the catcher can practice catching it in the center of their body, maintaining their balance, and “sticking” the catch out in front so it is clear to an umpire that it is a strike. If it is out of the strike zone they can work on reacting to bad pitches with a quick glove and blocking any balls in the dirt. A catcher has to be dependable so constantly practicing the fundamentals is crucial for a good catcher. Framing is when a catcher is able to make a pitch that may not necessarily be a strike, look more like a strike. For a right handed thrower, balls caught to the left side of the catcher should be caught with the thumb up in the glove, anything at the top of the strike zone should be caught with the thumb across, and anything to the right will be caught with the thumb down. As the ball is entering the glove, the catcher should roll her glove in towards the center of the plate. This is a more advanced move, but can be very beneficial. At all times when a catcher is framing, it should never look deliberate. It is a small glove roll in towards the center of the strike zone so pitches that are questionable look much better to the umpire.



## COMMUNICATION (Infield & Outfield)

**Communication:** infield with infield, outfield with outfield, and infield with outfield is very important. Ideally, the catcher should tell (yell) the number of outs and where the play is to the infield and outfield. Middle infield is the relay to the outfield, they will tell the outfield how many outs and where their throw should go on the next play. During a play all fielders should be communicating by calling out “mine”, “I”, or “I go” when catching or fielding a ball and should also call out where the ball is to be thrown. Communication between teammates is crucial in making plays but even more important in avoiding injuries that can happen with collisions.

## HITTING

(Based off of a right handed batter)

**Grip:** Lining up “knocking knuckles”, bat should be held in fingers (not palm of hand).

**Stance:** Even (Both feet lined up parallel to home plate, Open (front foot farther from home plate than back foot, Closed (back foot farther from home plate than front foot). Feet should be slightly wider than shoulders, toes pointing in the same direction, with knees slightly bent. Hands will be set back near shoulder (avoid extremes of hands set too high or too low) without hands wrapping behind the head. Head should be level (no tilting of head) with both eyes able to see the pitcher.

### Basic 3 step hitting:

1. **Load:** Hands will load straight back into a more powerful hitting position. Important that this move is short because if the hands go too far back it can result in a slower swing. The easiest way to tell is if the front arm straightens out then it is too far. Even when the hands go back there should be a slight bend in the front elbow. Also the load is done with the hands and never the shoulders. Players that turn their shoulders will “wrap” the bat behind their head which will decrease bat speed. The proper load consists of hands going straight back so they can go straight forward on the swing which will create the quickest line to the ball.
2. **Stride:** The stride is a short soft step with the front foot. As the foot goes towards the pitcher the body stays centered so the eyes can stay focused on the ball without a lot of movement. The hitter will land on the inside part of her front foot with the heel slightly off the ground. If done correctly the stride should look simple



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and balanced. Most problems occur when the hitter gets too heavy or long with the stride which results in too much weight on the front foot causing an off balance and weak swing.

3. **Pivot:** The pivot is the power move of the swing. The lower half of the body is stronger than the upper half, so the legs and hips will be the driving force to create speed and power. The pivot is done by dropping the front heel and turning the backside. This consists of the back foot, back knee, and hips all rotating through. When the pivot is done with speed and quickness it will create the bat speed that all hitters want. This lower half rotation pulls the hands through, so the upper half does not have to do all the work. Using the pivot is especially beneficial for younger children to help get through the ball and finish their swing with more consistency.

**Contact point:** The contact point is the time where the hitter makes contact with the ball. At the contact point the pivot should be rotated all the way through with legs firmly balanced on the ground. The body and head should be behind the ball with both hands out in front and arms almost completely extended. For a right handed hitter, the left hand should be palm down and the right hand should be palm up. Eyes should always be on the ball as it makes contact with the bat. After the contact point, the hitter follows through to finish with two hands still on the bat and completely balanced.

## BUNTING

**Sacrifice bunt:** (Bunt strikes only) This bunt is used when the batter's only job is to get a bunt down so the baserunner can advance to the next base. When doing a sacrifice the batter should be in the front of the batter's box and close enough to the plate so they can reach the outside corner. The batter will square around to bunt as soon as the pitcher begins her delivery. As long as the bunt is soft, on the ground, and in fair territory the batter has done her job.

**Stance** - Feet are even in the box, knees are bent, bat is held at the top of the strike zone, hands in front, barrel slightly above the knob. Bottom hand slides away from knob, as top hand moves up to where the barrel begins to form. Hands too close together on bat will result in less control. Bunting lower strikes requires knees to bend further. Batter should pull back on any ball outside of the strike zone.

**Drag bunt:** (Bunt strikes only) Unlike a sacrifice bunt, a drag bunt is when the batter is bunting to get a base hit. This bunt will be shown at the pitchers release point. It is shown late in the pitchers delivery so the corners (1st and 3rd basemen) have a slower reaction to the bunt. A drag bunt is a directional bunt, which means it should either go to



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first, third, or soft in front of the catcher. Bunting the ball hard back to the pitcher defeats the purpose of this bunt.

**Stance** - Feet are even in the box and knees should be bent. As the pitcher gets to her release point the back foot should drop straight back and the hands pull out in front. Body should still face home plate at contact.

### HITTING DRILLS:

1. **Dry swings:** A great drill to perform so players can focus primarily on their swings because of the absence of a ball. This is a really good method to see if a hitter can maintain their balance when taking a full swing. They can work on different parts of their approach whether it be their stance, stride, pivot, etc. With no ball involved players have the time to relax and completely break down their swing. It is also a good warm up to do dry swings before practice or games. Coaches can have the players spread out and take approximately 10-15 dry swings just to get loose.
2. **Tee (inside and outside pitch):** Hitting off the tee is a very simple but effective training method. As the ball is already set where it is supposed to be hit, hitters can work on consistently getting to their contact point and hitting as many line drives as possible. The tee should always be setup in relation to home plate. A ball down the middle should be set right in front of home plate. An outside pitch will be set slightly behind the front of home plate and an inside pitch will be set even more out in front than the middle pitch. As well as working inside and outside, hitters should also practice hitting balls at the bottom and top of the strike zone.
3. **Front toss:** The coach will be located directly in front of the hitter and will need a net for protection. Front toss can be done with the coach standing or sitting. Sitting is best because it mimics the height of a pitcher similar to the size they will be facing—this makes it more realistic. Pitches should be thrown underhand at a comfortable pace for the hitter, so they can work on their timing when hitting. Pitches should cover the entire strike zone which will give hitters a better idea of what pitches are strikes or balls. Front toss should be done from a relatively close distance so coaches can continuously throw strikes and it won't take very long to get through the entire team.
4. **Stop at contact:** In this drill the hitter will make contact with the ball, but instead of following through to finish they will stop at their contact point. It is important to see if they are making contact with their right hand palm up and their left hand palm down. The most common mistake occurs when the right hand rolls over early and the hitter cannot stop at their contact point. When doing this drill it



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should not be slow where it almost looks like they are bunting, it is basically a quick half swing and hitters should still be able to hit hard line drives.

5. **Rapid fire hitting:** Coaches can use the same setup as front toss or off to the side when using a Bownet. Instead of taking time between pitches the hitter will hit at a rapid fire pace. Coaches will continuously toss balls giving the hitter just enough time to reset their hands before starting their next swing. Because the hitter always has to worry about the next ball, they don't have time for big long swings where they lose their balance. This drill is really good for working on using their hands, staying short to the ball, as well as increasing bat speed.

## Base Running

**Lead-offs:** There are two ways to get a leadoff from any base. 1) Back foot on the base with front foot straight ahead. Runner will lead off right at release point. Runner will set their feet however they feel comfortable, usually they will have a preference of which foot they like to push off from. 2) Front foot on the base with the back foot behind the base. Runner will start their leadoff with the back foot coming forward first giving them more of a running start. This leadoff will not happen at release point but slightly before because the initial lead foot is still on the base as the trail foot starts the running motion. Usually the runner will have the left foot on the base and the right foot behind. For both leadoffs, whichever foot starts on the base, the foot should be positioned on the side of the base as opposed to directly on top. Runner should be able to push off the base like a sprinter.

**Sliding:** When sliding, the runner will make a figure four with their legs. The bent leg will be positioned underneath the straight leg. The lead leg can be with the left or the right, whichever way is most comfortable. The body will lay back so the back will stay flat to the ground. The most common problem in sliding is that players slow down first and do not carry any momentum, which results in them basically falling down. In order to slide which means covering distance on the ground, players must go hard into their slide without slowing down. When advancing to a base, players should always slide feet first. The only time a player should ever dive head first is when they are diving back to a base. When doing this they will bend their knees staying low to the ground, push off with their feet, and reach out with their hands to get back to the base. Same concept as a fielder diving for a ground ball. Runner will dive back to the base preferably with the right hand and the head turned towards the outfield so the face is always protected.

**If you have any additional questions please feel free to approach Marcus or Dewey at the fields or contact us at [dewey.pysa@gmail.com](mailto:dewey.pysa@gmail.com).**