

CATCHING

Use a “basket” to catch the ball. Round arms in front of you with elbows about four inches apart. Hands should be about shoulder high. Allow ball to land on inside of elbows, and wrap hands around top of ball. (*Tips: Bend knees to cushion the catch. Keep fingers tight against each other, to prevent jammed fingers. Discourage catching with hands, to ensure a more accurate catch, and to prevent jammed fingers. Move to the ball!*)

DRILLS:

- Partner-up and practice catching as the other girl throws. (Can be used with the Throwing drill)
- Get in a big circle, and practice catching. (Can be used with the Throwing drill)
- Kick (or throw) high-flies. This will help in judging a catch. (*Tip: This is a good drill to use before games and practices.*)
- Place a girl on each base and home plate. Make throws to each base. (*Tip: Make sure the girl has one foot on the base at the time of the catch. The catcher should have her foot on the 1st base side of the plate to prevent the runner from stepping on her or running her over.*)

BACK-UP POSITIONS

Each position needs a back-up to ensure the ball is played in a timely manner.

- 1st base: If the first baseman is pulled away, the right short stop, and sometimes the pitcher will cover 1st. The right fielder assists in the field and at times will cover 1st.
- 2nd base: Pitcher or center field
- 3rd base: Left short, and sometimes the pitcher will cover 3rd base. The left fielder assists in the field and at times may cover 3rd.
- Home plate: Left or right short, and sometimes the pitcher will cover home.

- Left short: Pitcher
- Right short: Pitcher
- Left field: Center field
- Right field: Center field
- Center field: Left or right field
- Pitcher: Left short, right short, and second baseman.

Tip: Make sure the girls are following the ball. Even though the ball may not be in their area, there is a potential that the ball will come to their area by the end of the play. Keep your eye on the ball at all times.

THROWING

DRILLS:

- Partner-up about ten feet apart. Throw with your stronger arm underhand aiming for the chest. Do the same about twenty feet apart. At 30 feet, switch to a side-arm release with a power step. *(Tip: Have the girls use the hand (underhand or overhand) that throws furthest and most accurate. This is a good warm-up before games and practices.)*
- The “Chest-Pass” is good for short distance throwing. *(Tip: Right short is about five to ten feet from the first baseman, she can chest pass for accuracy.)*
- Split the team in two groups. One line at first base and the other at right short. Roll the ball to right short and right short will throw the ball to first base. *(Tips: Make sure the girl at first has one foot on the base. It is better that the girl on first get off of the base to go get a overthrown ball, than to wait until the ball passes her to go get it. Follow the ball at all times.)*
- Split the team in two groups. One line at third base and the other at left short. Do the same drill as above.
- Using the two drills above, place a girl on second base as well and change up the play with the girl throwing from the shortstop.
- Get in a big circle and throw to the person across from you. *(Tip: This is a good drill to use before games and practices.)*
- Split the team in three groups. Position one girl at each of the bases (1st, 2nd, and 3rd). Have the three groups position themselves at left field, center field, and right field. Roll, kick, or bounce the ball to the girl and have them throw to the appropriate base. Swap the girls on the bases periodically. *(Tip: Make sure the throw is hard enough to make it to the base and accurate.)*

PITCHING

The “STRIKE ZONE” is any part of home plate and the area encompassed by imaginary lines drawn at right angles to the edges of home plate, extending upward to an imaginary line parallel to the plate and at a height equal to the **bottom** of the kicker’s knee. Any sliver of the ball in this “box” is a strike.

STRAIGHT PITCH

- Stand in rear of box. (*Tip: The pitcher can hold the ball with two hands if more comfortable.*)
- Advance toward home plate, bend knees, and bring arm/ball forward as if bowling. (*Tip: **Cup** the ball between palm and arm above wrist. Ball must be released below the pitchers waist and with one hand. (Exception: PW/Rookie league is allowed to release using two hands). As in bowling, once the ball is released, the hand should come straight up in line with home plate.*)
- Ball must hit at least once in fair territory before crossing the plate.

INSIDE CURVE

- Using the steps above, twist wrist with little finger toward the center, aiming the ball toward the opposite side of the plate. (*Tip: If you know what foot the kicker kicks with, put the ball across the plate at her non-kicking foot. This makes the kicker move in an awkward position to kick the ball.*)

OUTSIDE CURVE

- Using the steps above, **cup** the ball and rotate arm around outside of ball.

DRILLS:

- Practice, Practice, Practice...

KICKING

The top of the ball must cross the plate below the kicker's knee to be called a "STRIKE". A high bouncy ball that hits the plate is a strike, even when it touches high on the kicker. If she swings and does not contact the ball with her kicking leg (below knee), it is a strike. The ball may contact the kicking leg several times and be legal. If it touches any other part of her body or uniform, it is foul.

- Stay as far back in the circle as possible without standing or touching the white line. (*Tip: Watch for "rocking back" and move kicker forward if she does this.*)
- Take one step with the non-kicking foot and swing through with the kicking foot.
- Point your toe toward the ground.
- The ball should hit the bow-tie (shoe laces) on your shoe. (*Tip: Soccer kicks are not recommended. The ball tends to pop-up and is easily caught.*)
- Lean your upper body forward. (*Tip: Swing your arms for more power - opposite hand toward kicking knee, and same hand behind you.*)
- Bring foot down inside the circle. (*Rules: If the kicker swings and misses, and the foot comes down on any white line, or on or past home plate, the kicker will be called "OUT". Once the ball is pitched, if the kicker steps over or touches any white line, AND SWINGS at the ball, the kicker will be called "OUT".*)
- Grounder kicks: Follow the above steps. The ball should hit your shoelaces, but your foot should be turned inside. Keep your leg and foot in line, and rotate your knee toward the dugout. (*Tip: These are the best kicks.*)

DRILLS:

- Kick over and over.
- Kick against the fence.

BUNTING

(not allowed in PW/Rookie Divisions)

- Stay as far back in the circle as possible without standing or touching the white line. *(Tip: By staying back, the defensive team thinks the kicker is going to kick. If she is standing close to home plate, the defensive team knows what she is going to do, and the short stops and catcher are ready.)*
- Take one step with the non-kicking foot.
- Bring kicking foot forward about a foot length in front of non-kicking foot.
- Bend knees, lean forward, and raise kicking foot about two inches off the ground with toe pointed up to the sky.
- Push the ball forward with the underside of foot. *(Tip: Depending on the speed of the ball, the kicker may need to pull her foot back to cushion the kick, so it will barely go over the three foot line. Rules: A “double tap” is a foul ball. Foul bunt on third strike is an out.)*

DRILLS:

- Bunt over and over again.
- Pair up and bunt to each other.

RUNNING

- Once the ball has been kicked, run toward 1st base in the “BASE LANE”. (*Rule: The kicker-runner must not obstruct a fielder ACTIVELY fielding the ball.*)
- “BASE LANE”: A three foot wide lane, outside the foul line, for the kicker-runner running to first base. (*Tip: Run over the orange first base and turn to right. If you turn to the left, the defensive team may tag you “OUT” (below the waist), as an advance attempt to second base. Umpires have been known to call a runner “OUT”, even though they were walking back to first base if intent was evident. Rule: While running the bases, if the runner runs more than three feet to the right or left of the imaginary line from her current position to the next base, to avoid a tag, the runner will be automatically called “OUT”. Rule: If a play is made at first and the runner did not touch the orange base, she is out. Once she touches or passes the orange base, it ceases to exist and she must return to the white base.*)
- No lead-offs or stealing. (*Rule: If runner is off the base at time of pitch, she is out, dead ball.*)
- Once a defensive player has touched a fly ball, the runner can advance with caution to the next base. (*Tip: A runner is on first base and a fly ball is kicked. A defensive player runs to catch it and the ball bounces off of her back in the air, and is then caught by another defensive player (the ball never hits the ground). The runner can advance with caution to the next base once the ball hit the first player. Note – the outfield fence and umpires in fair territory are “blades of grass”, i.e. a ball that hits them has hit the ground and the ball is live. A kick that hits the fence (or a fielder) and falls over is a homerun.*)

DRILLS:

- Time the runner from home plate to first base. (*Tip: Repeat this a few times to allow the runners to beat their previous times.*)
- Have them run from home to first base. Have a coach at first switch off having the runner “STAY”, in which the runner will overrun first base and turn to right, or “TWO”, in which the runner will advance to second base. (*Tip: Make sure the runner is told what to do before she reaches the base. This will prevent hesitation. Make sure the runner does not slow down prior to reaching the base. She should be going full force past first base or rounding to second base.*)
- Coaches: The first base coach is responsible for the kicker and the runner on first base. Once the runner leaves first base, the third base coach takes over. (*Tip: Make sure the runner is watching the third base coach once she leaves first base.*)