

ARM SAFETY - READ FIRST

- **Pitch counts:** 50 pitches/game max, 75 pitches/week max for 9-10 year olds
- **Rest:** 1-3 days rest after 20+ pitches (see league rules)
- **NO breaking balls:** Fastball and changeup ONLY at this age
- **Pain = stop:** Any arm/elbow/shoulder pain means stop immediately
- **Warm up first:** Never pitch cold - 10-15 throws before any pitching drill

Balance Point Hold

3-4 min

EQUIPMENT

No equipment needed, can use pitching rubber or line on ground

SETUP & EXECUTION

Player stands on pitching rubber (or imaginary rubber). Lift lead leg to balance point - knee at waist height, hands together at chest. Hold for 3-5 seconds. Coach counts out loud. Do 5-8 reps. Focus on staying tall and controlled.

COACHING POINTS

- Head stays level - don't lean back or tilt sideways
- Posting leg (back leg) slightly bent, not locked
- Hands stay together and quiet at chest
- Lift knee straight up, not across body

SKILLS FOCUS

Balance Core strength Body control

Knee-to-Knee Delivery

5-6 min

EQUIPMENT

1 ball per pitcher, catcher or net 35-40 feet away

SETUP & EXECUTION

Start in balance position (leg lifted). On coach's signal, stride toward target while separating hands. Focus on leading with hip, not with front foot. Front knee should stay over front ankle at landing. Complete throw to target. Do 8-10 reps.

COACHING POINTS

- Hip leads the stride - think "show your hip pocket to the catcher"
- Stride foot lands closed (toes pointing slightly toward 3B for righties)
- Front knee stays firm at landing - don't collapse forward
- Arm stays loose - don't rush arm action

SKILLS FOCUS

Hip lead Stride mechanics Landing position

EQUIPMENT

1 ball per pitcher, pitching rubber, catcher or target 40-46 feet

SETUP & EXECUTION

Start with both feet on rubber (full windup stance). Take small rocker step back with stride foot, pivot on rubber, lift to balance, then deliver pitch. This is the full windup motion at slow speed. Do 8-10 pitches, focusing on rhythm not velocity.

COACHING POINTS

- Rocker step is **SMALL** - just 6-8 inches back
- Turn pivot foot parallel to rubber (not past it)
- Stay tall throughout - don't drop head
- Rhythm should feel smooth - "rock, lift, throw"

SKILLS FOCUS

Full windup Rhythm Timing

Stretch Position Pitching

5-6 min

EQUIPMENT

1 ball per pitcher, pitching rubber, catcher or target 40-46 feet

SETUP & EXECUTION

Start in stretch position: front foot toward home, back foot on rubber, hands set at belt. Look at imaginary runner, come set (pause), then lift and deliver. Practice looking to first before each pitch. Do 8-10 pitches.

COACHING POINTS

- Must come to complete stop before pitching (the "set" position)
- Hands come set at belt or chest - pick one spot consistently
- Quick look to first, then home - head turns, not whole body
- Same leg lift and delivery as windup

SKILLS FOCUS

Stretch mechanics Set position Runner awareness

Fastball Grip & Release

4-5 min

EQUIPMENT

1 ball per player

SETUP & EXECUTION

Teach 4-seam grip: index and middle fingers across the wide seams ("horseshoe" facing away), thumb underneath on leather. Fingers not too wide apart (1 finger width gap). Have players grip, show coach, then make 10 easy throws focusing on keeping grip through release.

COACHING POINTS

- Ball held in fingers, not jammed back in palm
- Light grip - "hold an egg, not a rock"
- Fingers stay on top through release
- Wrist snaps straight down - ball should have true backspin

PRO TIP

Have players find the grip in their glove before every pitch. This becomes automatic with practice and helps with consistency.

Changeup Introduction (Optional)

5-6 min

EQUIPMENT

1 ball per player, catcher or net 35-40 feet away

SETUP & EXECUTION

Use PALM BALL grip only at this age: ball deep in palm with all fingers on top. Circle change is too difficult for small hands. Throw with SAME arm speed as fastball - the grip creates the speed change. Start at short distance (20-25 feet). Only introduce if fastball is consistent.

COACHING POINTS

- Arm speed stays the same - don't slow down arm to slow pitch
- Ball should just be slower - don't worry about movement
- If they're slowing their arm, stop - it's not ready yet
- Most 9-10 year olds don't need this pitch - fastball location is more important

WARNING

This is OPTIONAL - only for pitchers with consistent fastball mechanics. Focus on fastball command first. No curveballs, sliders, or other breaking balls at this age.

EQUIPMENT

Bucket of balls, catcher with mitt or strike zone target, pitching rubber at 46 feet

SETUP & EXECUTION

Divide strike zone into 4 quadrants (up/down, in/out). Catcher sets up in one quadrant, pitcher tries to hit it. 4 pitches to each zone. Keep score: 2 points for hitting zone, 1 point for strike, 0 for ball. Builds location awareness.

COACHING POINTS

- Miss inside the zone, not outside - "miss to the middle"
- Low strikes are better than high strikes
- Focus on hitting glove, not "throwing hard"
- Same mechanics every pitch - location comes from aim point

SKILLS FOCUS

Location Control Concentration

EQUIPMENT

Balls, bases set up, first baseman at position, pitching mound

SETUP & EXECUTION

Pitcher simulates pitch from mound. Coach rolls ball toward pitcher (comebackers). Pitcher fields and throws to first. Then practice covering first: pitcher delivers, coach hits slow grounder to 1B side, pitcher runs to cover first, receives throw from first baseman while touching base.

COACHING POINTS

- On comebackers: field with two hands, set feet, throw
- Covering first: run in arc to hit bag from fair territory side
- Touch inside of bag, look for throw, then get out of runner's way
- Call "I got it!" or "First!" to communicate with first baseman

SKILLS FOCUS

Fielding Covering first Game awareness

Pickoff Move to First (Basics)

5-6 min

EQUIPMENT

Ball, pitching rubber, first base and first baseman

SETUP & EXECUTION

From stretch position, pitcher practices STEPPING OFF the rubber (back foot steps back first) then throwing to first. This is the ONLY pickoff move to teach at 9-10. Skip the inside move - it's too advanced and causes balks. Practice 8-10 step-off throws.

COACHING POINTS

- Step OFF first, THEN throw - never throw while still on rubber
- Back foot comes off rubber FIRST, then you can throw anywhere
- Make a good throw - bounced pickoffs let runners advance
- Look at the runner, step off calmly, throw accurately

PRO TIP

At 9-10, pickoffs aren't about getting outs - they're about making runners think twice. 1-2 step-off looks per at-bat is plenty. Save the "inside move" for age 11+.

Simulated Innings

10-12 min

EQUIPMENT

Full infield setup, catcher, pitching mound at 46 feet, pitch counter

SETUP & EXECUTION

Pitcher throws simulated at-bats to catcher. Coach calls balls and strikes. 3 "batters" = 1 inning. Keep track of pitch count. After each "out," pitcher takes a breath and resets mentally. Practice full routine between pitches (get ball, get sign, deliver).

COACHING POINTS

- Develop a consistent routine between pitches
- Take a breath before stepping on rubber
- Strike one is the most important pitch - attack the zone
- After a ball, don't overthrow - just hit the glove

SKILLS FOCUS

Game simulation Mental routine Pitch count management

EQUIPMENT

Small hand towel for each pitcher, partner or target

SETUP & EXECUTION

Pitcher holds towel at the end, goes through full delivery motion, tries to snap towel against partner's glove (held at strike zone height). This works on extension and follow-through without throwing a ball. Partner stands at stride length + arm length distance.

COACHING POINTS

- Full extension - arm should be fully extended at "release"
- Follow through across body - not stopping arm short
- Can do many reps without arm fatigue
- Listen for the "snap" sound - means good extension

PRO TIP

Great drill for days between pitching outings. Works on mechanics without adding arm stress.