

Why warm-up matters: Cold muscles = injuries. A good warm-up increases blood flow, loosens joints, and gets kids mentally focused. Keep it consistent so players know what to expect. Aim for 10-12 minutes before skill work.

Dynamic Stretching Sequence

5-6 min

SETUP

Line players up on the foul line. Each exercise goes from foul line to about 60 feet out. Jog back after each one. Keep them moving - no standing around.

EXERCISE SEQUENCE (DO IN ORDER)

- **Jog** - Easy pace to get blood moving
- **High knees** - Drive knees up, pump arms
- **Butt kicks** - Heels to glutes, stay light on feet
- **Karaoke/Carioca** - Lateral movement, hips rotating
- **Walking lunges** - Big steps, knee doesn't pass toe
- **Frankensteins** - Straight leg kicks, touch opposite hand
- **Arm circles** - Small to big, forward then backward
- **Sprint 75%** - Build up speed, not full out

COACHING POINTS

- No static stretching before activity - save that for after practice
- Watch for kids just going through the motions - demand quality
- Make it routine - same order every practice

Band Work (Arm Care)

3-4 min

EQUIPMENT

Resistance bands (light/youth weight) - optional but recommended

EXERCISES (10 REPS EACH)

- **External rotation** - Elbow at side, rotate forearm out
- **Internal rotation** - Elbow at side, rotate forearm in
- **Pull-aparts** - Arms straight, pull band apart at chest
- **Overhead stretch** - Hold band overhead, gentle pull apart

PRO TIP

If no bands, do these movements without resistance. The movement patterns still help. Arm care habits built at 9-10 prevent injuries at 14-15.

Throwing Progression (Standard Warm-Up)

8-10 min

SEQUENCE

- **Wrist flicks** - 10 throws at 10 feet (kneeling)
- **One-knee throws** - 10 throws at 25 feet
- **Standing throws** - 10 throws at 45 feet
- **Back up** - 5-10 throws, increase distance to comfort
- **Come back in** - Work back to 45-50 feet with zip

COACHING POINTS

- Never start throwing hard from distance - build up
- If a throw sails or accuracy drops, move closer
- This is the same every practice - make it automatic

Base Running Conditioning

5-6 min

SETUP

Use the bases for conditioning - makes it baseball-specific and more fun than just running. Split into groups to keep rest short but not zero.

OPTIONS (PICK 1-2 PER PRACTICE)

- **Home to first sprints** - Full speed, run through the bag
- **Home to second (double)** - Sprint, round first hard
- **Inside-the-parker** - All the way around, touch every base
- **Relay race** - Teams, baton is a ball, around the bases

COACHING POINTS

- Make it competitive - kids will run harder in a race
- Proper base running form even when tired
- This is conditioning AND skill work combined

Fun Finishers (End of Practice)

5 min

WHY

End practice on a high note. Kids remember the end - make it fun and competitive. Builds team camaraderie and keeps them wanting to come back.

OPTIONS

- **Knockout (throwing)** - Hit the target, miss and you're out
- **Home run derby** - Off tee or soft toss, fence = HR
- **Pickle** - Rundowns, teaches base running and tagging
- **Relay races** - Any variation, teams competing
- **Flip cup fielding** - Field grounder, run to line, flip cup, next person goes

PRO TIP

Losers do 5 push-ups or a sprint - keeps stakes low but adds excitement. Never make conditioning feel like punishment.

Cool-Down Stretches

3-4 min

WHEN

After practice, during team huddle. This is where static stretching belongs - muscles are warm and ready to lengthen.

STRETCHES (HOLD 15-20 SECONDS EACH)

- **Quad stretch** - Stand on one leg, pull heel to butt
- **Hamstring stretch** - Sit, reach for toes
- **Shoulder stretch** - Arm across body, hold at elbow
- **Tricep stretch** - Arm overhead, pull elbow behind head
- **Butterfly** - Sit, soles together, push knees down