

The "Bucket Drill."

Setup: On its side, place a large garbage pail (33 gallons or larger size) atop home plate so that the opening faces the diamond. Place a ball bag with several softballs behind 2nd base. Divide your team into two groups. Instruct one group to line up at medium depth in left-center field and the other at the same depth in right-center field.

Execution: Have the first two players in each line break away from their groups and assume a normal ready fielding position. Throw a soft pop fly into the air for the fielders to catch. After the catch, they crow hop and throw the ball at cutoff-height to home plate.

Instruct them to throw the ball into the bucket with the ball bouncing once or twice prior to home plate. After each throw the players rotate. Have the fielder run to the end of the line, and the next player at the front of the line run to the start position. Keep track of the number of throws that make it into the bucket.

Fielding Skills:

An extension of this drill is to hit fly balls from home plate to players lined up behind each other and ask them to throw the ball in the bucket at home plate.

Fly ball catching skills practiced here include:

Move quickly to the ball;

Run on the balls of the feet (running on the heels will absorb ground shock and make the ball seem to jump around in mid air);

Set up beneath the ball with momentum going forward toward plate as the catch is made;

Catch the ball above the bill of the cap slightly off-center toward the throwing shoulder;

Glove fingers are pointed to the sky (not turned toward the horizon).

Throwing skills include:

Aggressively squaring the body to the target,

The crow hop;

Correct arm extension with fingers atop the ball and pointed straight back;

Grip the ball across the seams; hip roll and follow through.

Coaches: One coach can operate this drill by alternating throws between each group. With two coaches, one coach can work with each group. With three coaches, one coach can gather balls around the home plate area and refill the ball bag.

