

Farms Goals

1. Throwing: Able to accurately throw to a partner at 45 ft.
2. Receiving: Able to field ground balls and catch fly balls from 45 ft and know how to receive a ball at a base.
3. Fielding: Able to cover a base without interfering with the runner.
4. Hitting: Able to hit a machine pitched ball at least 60 ft (i.e. distance to first or third base).
5. Running: Able to run through or round first base and decide whether to stay or run to second. Know how to tag up.
6. Basics of the Game: Know who covers second base.
7. Prepare for Pitching (and catching) in the Minors.

Progression of Farms Goals

Throwing

1. Teach the proper way to hold a ball with a **four seam grip**. Fingers are across the “horse shoe”. The thumb is directly below the fingers.
 - a. Smaller players may need to hold the ball with three or four fingers on top of the seams instead of standard two fingers. As the players get older and grow, they will be able to use two fingers.
2. Players pick the ball off the ground, and show the proper grip to a player or parent.
3. **Throwing from one knee**. Players kneel on their throwing side knee. Glove side knee is pointed to their partner. Make a “T” with their arms, their glove pointing at their partner. Turn their hips as they throw to their partners. Tuck the glove to the body as the hips turn.
4. **Throwing from a standing position**. Make a “T” with their arms, their glove pointing at their partner. Glove side foot is pointing at their partner. Step with the front foot and turn their hips as they throw to their partners. Tuck the glove to the body as the hips turn.
5. Throw from a standing position to their partner. Goal is to be able to consistently throw a catchable ball to their partner from a distance of 45 feet.
6. **Throwing across the infield**
 - a. Teach the “shuffle, shuffle, throw” method.
 - b. “Shuffle, Shuffle, Throw”: The point of this method is to cut down the distance the player has to throw the ball and to gain some momentum prior to throwing it. Once the ball is fielded the player shuffles their feet (or skips) twice with their front foot pointed in the direction they are going to throw the ball. The player then throws the ball.
 - c. Using the “shuffle, shuffle, throw” method, throw a ball to their partner from a distance of 45 feet.
 - d. Using the “shuffle, shuffle, throw” method, throw from shortstop to first base, about 65 feet. Goal is to consistently throw a catchable ball from shortstop to first base.

Receiving

1. Teach players to follow the ball with their eyes into their hands or glove, using two hands to secure the ball.
2. Teach players to **catch the ball out in front of their bodies** for both ground balls and thrown balls.

3. For thrown balls, if necessary, start by catching the ball with the glove turned up. Progress to catching with the glove turned out.
4. From a distance of 30 feet, throw a ball so that it arcs 15 feet above the player's head.
5. From a distance of 45 feet, throw a ball so that it arcs 20 feet above the player's head.
6. From a distance of 30 feet, hit a ground ball at the player.
7. From a distance of 45 feet, hit a ground ball at the player.

Fielding

1. Teach players the "Ready Position": feet slightly wider than shoulders, knees bent, hands between the knees with glove pocket facing up.
2. From a distance of 30 feet, throw a ball so that it goes 15 feet above the player's head. Player starts in the ready position and uses a glove and two hands to catch the ball.
3. From a distance of 45 feet, throw a ball so that it goes 20 feet above the player's head. Player starts in the ready position and uses a glove and two hands to catch the ball.
4. From a distance of 30 feet, hit a ground ball at the player. Player starts in the ready position and uses a glove and two hands to catch the ball.
5. From a distance of 45 feet, hit a ground ball at the player. Player starts in the ready position and uses a glove and two hands to catch the ball.
6. When receiving a throw at a base for a force out, the player places their throwing side foot against the base. Make sure the player does not interfere with the runner as they are running through or rounding the base. Remind the fielders that they are also not to impede the runners' progress in any way.

Hitting

1. Help players determine if they bat right or left handed.
2. **Bat grip** – Front arm hand on the bottom, back arm hand on top. "Knocking knuckles" for both hands should line up.
3. **Stance**
 - a. Feet slightly wider than the shoulders. Knees bent.
 - b. Hands a little lower than shoulder height, and a few inches away from the body. Hands are offset from the center of the body towards the back shoulder.
 - c. Elbows bent about 90 degrees and lower than the hands.
4. **Stance at the plate**: The player should stand a little under a bat length away from the center of the plate, with their front foot a little behind the middle of the plate.
5. **Load**: Add loading the hands to swing mechanics progression before the Step. To load the hands, the hands drift back a short distance, hips may twist back as part of the load.
6. **Focus on Swing Mechanics**:
 - a. Load: The hands drift back a short distance, hips may twist back as part of the load.
 - b. Step: Step forward with the front foot. Small step, foot barely comes off the ground. Knees remain bent.
 - c. Twist: Lift the back heel, turn the hips. Back foot should pivot or move forward as the hips rotate, i.e. "Squish the bug" or drive forward with the back foot. Back elbow comes toward the body to bring the bat into the swing plane as the hips rotate. Knob of the bat should be pointing at the ball. Hands are close the body.

- d. Snap: Batter snaps the wrists to swing the bat through the plane of the ball. End of the bat should be pointing towards the pitcher. Hands are extended away from the body.
- e. Finish: Arms continue through the swing with the bat "folding over" the front shoulder.
7. Starting from the Stance, move to the Load position.
8. Take a full swing, incorporating the Load.
9. Hit coach pitching incorporating the Load. Goal is to be able to hit the ball through the infield.

Running

1. Have players pretend to hit the ball and then run through first base. Goal is to not slow down until they have touched first base.
2. Have players pretend to hit the ball and the round first base running all the way to second. Place marks in the baseline as to where they should start their round and how wide to go. When rounding first base their foot should push off the inside part of the base. Goal is to not slow down until they approach second base.
3. Have players pretend to hit the ball and start running to first base. After they pretend to hit the ball, the first base coach instructs them as to whether they **run through first base, round first base and stop**, or round first base and run to second. Repeat having each player run to all three stopping points.
4. **Tagging up**
 - a. Player starts on the base in a position ready to run. They listen for the coach to tell them when it is ok to run.
 - b. Player starts 5 to 10 feet off the base, as if they have taken a secondary lead. Coach tells them to go tag, runner goes back to the base and gets ready to run. Coach tells them when to go.
 - c. Player starts 5 to 10 feet off the base, as if they have taken a secondary lead. Pop fly is thrown into the outfield. Coach tells them to go tag, runner goes back to the base and gets ready to run. If it's clear the ball is not going to be caught the runner can take off early. Coach tells them when to go.

Basics of the Game

1. Teach basic baseball terminology: inning, out, infield, outfield, fair ball, foul ball.
2. Teach players good sportsmanship and remind players to have fun.
3. Hit a ground ball to the left side of the infield and have the second baseman receive the throw at second base. Repeat, hitting the ball to both the shortstop and third baseman.
4. Hit a ground ball to the right side of the infield and have the short stop receive the throw at second base. Repeat, hitting the ball to base the second baseman and first baseman.
5. Have the shortstop and second baseman decide who will cover second base if the ball is hit to the pitcher, then hit the ball to the pitcher. The other should back up the player receiving the throw. Repeat, giving each a turn to receive the ball at second and the other to backup.

Pitching

1. Teach the 5 progressions of pitching from the stretch without throwing a ball.
 - a. Set position
 - b. Kick
 - c. Stride
 - d. Hip rotation
 - e. Follow through.
2. **Set position:** Feet are parallel to the pitching rubber, with the throwing side foot in front and against the rubber. Hands are together about belt high.
3. Starting in the set position, **kick the front leg** and balance on the back foot for 10 seconds. Repeat until the player can easily balance.
4. Starting in the set position, kick the front leg and **stride out**. Front foot and glove hand should point at the catcher. Throwing hand should be pointed at second base. Repeat until the player can consistently transition from the set position to the stride position and maintain balance.
5. Starting in the stride position, lift the back heel, **rotate hips**, shift weight forward, draw glove hand into the body, and throwing arm should form an "L" at the side of the body. Repeat until the player can consistently transition from the stride position to rotating the hips.
6. Starting in the stride position, rotate the hips, throw the ball and **follow through**. Let momentum carry the back leg through so that both feet are pointing at the catcher. Repeat until the player can consistently transition from the stride position to follow through.
7. Using the 5 progressions of pitching from the stretch, throw to a catcher at 20 feet.
8. Using the 5 progressions of pitching from the stretch, throw to a catcher at 38 feet. Goal is to consistently throw a pitch that can be caught by the catcher.

Catching

1. Teach players the proper way for a **catcher to squat** behind the plate.
 - a. Shoulders square with the pitcher.
 - b. Feet slightly wider than the shoulders.
 - c. Do not squat so low that they are "resting" on their calves.
 - d. Throwing hand is behind leg for protection.
 - e. Glove is extended in front of the body at about knee height.
2. In a squat position and using their own glove, a catcher is able to catch a pitched ball from 20 feet.
3. In a squat position and using their own glove, a catcher is able to catch a pitched ball from 38 feet.
4. In a squat position and using a catcher's mitt, a catcher is able to catch a pitched ball from 38 feet. Should be able to catch most strikes and some balls.
5. **One Knee Stance Alternative** - The one knee stance is a good alternative for younger players who don't have the strength to stay in a traditional stance for any length of time.
 - a. Players get in a stance where one knee (typically the glove side knee) is down on the ground. The other knee is up with the foot kicked out slightly to the side.
 - b. The player's upper body should be centered over their legs or slightly offset to the knee down side. Their weight should not be directly over their knee down leg.
 - c. The player's butt should be back with their chest leaning slightly forward, they should not be upright.

- d. The glove arm should be away from the body, but the arm in a relaxed position. Thumb should be down and the target should be about the batter's knee height.
6. Glove Movement (aka Framing) - Glove movement provides the catcher a method of being more relaxed when receiving the ball but also simplifies some of the process by always working the glove upward.
 - a. Target - Start with the catcher in a good receiving stance and the glove at the bottom of the zone.
 - b. Glove Load - Once the pitcher separates their hands, the catcher should relax their glove hand/arm. Typically the glove should drop at least four or five inches, but could be dropped all the way to the ground. The intent is to be relaxed and get into a position where the glove is always working up to catch the ball.
 - c. Receive - For pitches that are strikes, or close to being strikes, the glove should be moving "against" the pitch and back towards the strike zone.
 - d. Presentation - Once the ball is caught, the glove movement can continue for a few inches but should stop and be held for half a second or second to present the ball to the umpire. Avoid dropping the glove immediately.
7. Teaching Glove Movement - A progression for teaching glove movement.
 - a. The following sequence can be used for each of the different steps in the progression below.
 - i. Target - Start by saying "Target" and have the player give a good target. If short tossing balls, hold the ball out in front of you.
 - ii. Glove Load - Next say "Glove Load" and have the player perform their glove load. If short tossing balls, do this as you pull the ball back to flip it to them.
 - iii. Receive - Next say "Receive". The player should receive and present the ball.
 - b. Progression
 - i. Tee - Place a ball on a short tee (ball should be about knee height for the player). Player uses a bare hand and goes through the Target, Glove Load, Receive progression. They should grab the ball from underneath with their thumb down. Place the tee in the middle of the plate and on the edges, forcing the catcher to move their arm to get around the ball and work back towards the middle of plate.
 - ii. Bare Handed Toss - The same Target, Glove Load, Receive progression as above but now flip balls (baseballs, or tennis balls) to the player and have them catch with their bare hand. Again flip the ball to different locations on the plate.
 - iii. Short Toss with Gove - The same as the Bare Handed Toss, but now have the player use a catcher's mitt and use baseballs.
 - iv. Live Pitching - Now have the catcher receive live pitching, without the Target, Glove Load and Receive prompts. You will probably have to remind them to use their glove load. Watch for excessive body movement. For pitches in or close to the strike zone, they should be able to receive by only moving their arm or limited body sway.