**CWS U10 Practice Plan (Draft 1)**

**Overall Practice Plan**

Suggested practice plan:

* Warmup
* Throwing
* Stations (rotate small groups of 3-4 through each depending on what you want to teach and number of coaches available, do not need to do all every practice)
	+ Fielding
	+ Hitting
	+ Pitching
* Group drill (focus on game situations including baserunning)

**Throwing Progression**

Philosophy

* A consistent throwing progression should be used every practice and game to develop good mechanics and muscle memory for throwing

Be sure to identify and reinforce proper grip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URcUxaCEpYU&t=222s> at 0:30-0:45 and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uk8MbhWAMck> at 0-0:30

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| Drill | Setup Position | Teaching Points  | Video Resources |
| Darts | Tall half kneeling:* throwing knee down behind, glove knee up and in front
* Butt is up and not resting on back knee

About 5 feet apart | * Purpose is to teach wrist snap by throwing to partner using only the lower arm
* Start with throwing elbow at shoulder height and pointing at target
* Emphasize pulling ball down with the fingers
* Fingers should end up point down to the ground
 | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8drv7RrkUNA><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmFSIUWnAEI&t=346s> at 3:30-4:20<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77r6mWAUecA> at 0:30Additional optional group drill to reinforce wrist snap (can be done after throwing progression early in the season) – towel drill: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URcUxaCEpYU&t=222s> at 5:00-5:40 |
| Scarecrow | Tall half kneeingAbout 10 feet apart | * Purpose is to focus on arm mechanics after separation from glove and rotation from shoulders
* Both arms should be out to the sides with elbows slightly bent and palms facing down. Front elbow or glove should point at target
* Throw from this as a starting position
* Emphasize that throwing arm should end up outside front knee at the end of the throw. If it ends up inside the player has not rotated their shoulders
 | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URcUxaCEpYU&t=222s> at 2:10-5:00<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zMkZtuAkU0> at 1:00-1:35 |
| Arm circle | Tall half kneeingAbout 10 feet apart | * Purpose is to teach proper separation and transition into and through “scarecrow” position
* Start with ball in glove at belly button
* Separate ball from glove and bring it back in a circle to scarecrow position. “Pet the dog” or “thumb to thigh” are good phrases to use to help the kids remember to bring the ball down around the bottom of the “circle”.
* The arm needs to transition to and through the “scarecrow” position smoothly. The ball and arm should never abruptly stop and start, the arm circle should be smooth
* Want to avoid “bow and arrow” - kids pulling the ball straight back to their ear instead of circling down below. The ball never goes near the ear.
 | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8drv7RrkUNA> at 1:15-2:15 but emphasize moving through scarecrow position not lifting ball high and pausing as in this video<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNn2Tn3lXIk> at 0:30-0:45 |
| Bounce  | Standing:* Standing sideways to target with feet wider than shoulder width in a athletic stance
* Both feet should face sideways 90 degrees to target
* Both toes should be on the same line to the target

About 20 feet apart | * Purpose is to correct to very common and related throwing problems of rotating fingers around the ball and throwing with a low elbow. This drill will inhibit both
* Goal of the drill is to have the kids throw the ball hard into the ground and bounce once or twice before it gets to their partner. In order to bounce the ball hard they will have to use proper wrist snap and keep their elbow up
* Ball will need to bounce about 1/3 of the way to their partner
 | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epluA6pzObM> |
| Rocker | Standing:* Standing sideways to target with feet wider than shoulder width in a athletic stance
* Both feet should face sideways 90 degrees to target
* Both toes should be on the same line to the target

About 25 feet apart | * Purpose of drill is to create awareness of weight transfer which is needed to create momentum in throwing
* Starting in power position with ball in glove at belly button
* Kids shift weight forward to front leg, backwards to back leg, and then throw
 | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmFSIUWnAEI&t=346s> at 6-6:50 |
| Full throws |  | * Kids should now be ready to throw naturally using the skills built up in the earlier progression
* Emphasize step-step throw starting with the throwing foot and then the glove foot. A common error at this age is for kids to do the opposite which results in throwing when the throwing foot lands in which case the hips and shoulders will be open and they will have no power in their throw
* At U10 the focus should be on basic footwork and moving the right feet at the right time. At higher levels more specific types of footwork used infielding can be introduced and used in warmup (shuffle step, step behind and step across)
* As they get warm they can move further apart
 | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJdjBtCsbrA> at 1:00-1:15<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8drv7RrkUNA> at 2:20-3:30 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zMkZtuAkU0> at 2:45-3:15  |

**Fielding Practice Plan**

Philosophy

* Progressive skill development in an appropriate sequence
* Each practice should review the prior one to develop muscle memory and then intro a new skill
* New skills should be practiced progressively with solo drills, coach-assisted drills and then with coaches hitting

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| Practice | Focus area | Drills and progressions | Teaching points | Video resources |
| 1 | Infielding 1 – catching position  | Solo drills1. Have kids get in circle and demonstrate proper fielding position
2. Put ball on the ground in front of each kid and have then move from a ready position into proper fielding position

Partner drills – kids rolling to each other 1. Triangle position on knees
2. Triangle position on feet
 | * Feet wider than shoulder width
* Legs bent, butt down
* Glove out front of feet (glove and feet make a triangle) not between feet
* Free hand in air on top of glove
* Emphasize that kids need to roll slowly and carefully to allow their partner to practice – be a good partner
 | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmR1rRfUL4g><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHA1orN7eHE> to 6:00<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sk6hQSa0_s4> to 4:50<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5JMPFtnVDs> at 0-0:25<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8c4GkmPAfQ> to 1:40<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UqDA8MfHes&t=112s> to 2:18 |
| Throwing 1 – throwing footwork sequence | 1. Start with ball in glove
2. pretend to catch (proper fielding position)
3. step-step throw to partner
 | * Want to introduce the concept of moving feet when throwing
* From catching position fielder should generally take two steps and throw
* First step is with the throwing hand, second step is with the glove hand
* Be careful kids are not stepping with their throwing foot forward when they throw, very common at this age
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| 2 | Outfield 1 - basic outfield catching position | Solo drills1. Kids spread out in the field and throw the ball up to themselves

Partner drills1. Kids in a line, coaches throw easy pop ups straight overhead
 | * Proper outfield catching position is to catch in front of the face with two hands, fingers up and elbows down
* Kids are often scared to catch in front of their face but that is actually the best way to avoid getting hit in the face
* It can be helpful to start with bean bags until kids are confident catching overhead
 | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uY8YL1i2xCE><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kLwkivjyD8> to 3:00 |
| 3 | Infielding 2 – review and introduction of hitting | Solo drills1. Review solo drills from practice 1

Partners drills1. Review partner drills from practice 1
2. Add a fake throw after the catch during partner drills

Live drills1. Introduce coaches hitting balls and kids throwing to base
 | * Emphasize transitioning from catching position to throwing position
* Live drills should be short throws, either kids at SS throwing to 2B or at 2B position throwing to 1B
 | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHA1orN7eHE> to 6:00 |
| 4 | Infielding 3 – lateral movement  | Solo drills1. Review solo drills from practice 1
2. Cone shuffling drill

Partner drills1. Coaches rolling to side (just outside of feet)
2. Kids rolling to each other in pairs (just outside of feet)

Live drills1. Coaches hitting balls and kids throwing to base
 | * Purpose of cone shuffling drill is to teach kids to move their feet to where the ball is
* Emphasize moving to catch the ball between legs in proper triangle position
* Live drills should be short throws, either kids at SS throwing to 2B or at 2B position throwing to 1B
 | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UqDA8MfHes&t=112s> 4:37 – 5:15 |
| 5 | Infielding 4 – lateral movement with side shuffle | Solo drills1. Three ball drill – balls a bit further apart, about 1 meter

Partner drills1. Coaches rolling to side (just outside of feet)
2. Kids rolling to each other in pairs (just outside of feet)

Live drills1. Coaches hitting balls and kids throwing to base
 | * Side shuffle footwork will move the kids further than the side-step
* Foot work is to step to the side, bring back foot together with front foot, then push off of back foot while stepping again with front foot
* Continue to emphasize that the goal is to catch the ball between the feet in proper triangle position
* Live drills should be short throws, either kids at SS throwing to 2B or at 2B position throwing to 1B
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| 6 | Outfield 2 - catching with lateral movement | Solo drills1. Review solo outfield catching drill

Partner drills1. Review partner outfield catching drill
2. Kids in line at a cone, coaches tossing easy pop ups to either side of the cone
 | * Review proper outfield catching position – catch in front of the face with two hands
* Drill will require kids to move to get to where the ball is – still want them to catch in front of their face
* Emphasize that we want to run quickly to where the ball is going
 |  |
| 7 | Throwing 2 – shuffle step | Solo drills1. Ball in glove – kids pretend to catch, shuffle step and fake throw

Partner drills1. Coaches rolling – kids catch, shuffle step and fake throw

Live drills1. Coaches hitting balls and kids throwing to near base
 | * Shuffle step is for short throws like second to first or short to second
* Footwork from catching position is to move throwing hand foot together with glove foot, then step with glove foot to throw
* Footwork is still step-step with the same feet, we are just adding a specific technique
* Emphasize that we need to move our feet to make a strong throw
* Live drills should be short throws, either kids at SS throwing to 2B or at 2B position throwing to 1B
 |  |
| 8 | Throwing 3 – step across | Solo drills1. Ball in glove – kids pretend to catch, step across and fake throw

Partner drills1. Coaches rolling – kids catch, step across and fake throw

Live drills1. Coaches hitting balls and kids throwing to far base
 | * Step across is for long throws like short or third to first
* Footwork from catching position is to step throwing hand foot forwards towards target then step with glove foot to throw
* Footwork is again still step-step with the same feet, we are just adding a specific technique
* Emphasize that we are trying to move our bodies towards the target to make a stronger throw
* Live drills should be long throws, kids at SS or 3B throwing to 1B
 |  |
| 9 | Throwing 4 – underhand toss | Solo drills* Ball in glove – kids practice a fake catch and underhand throw to base

Partner drills* Ball in glove – kids in a line, fake catch and then underhand throw to base
* Coaches rolling – kids catch, then underhand throw to base

Live drills* Coaches hitting balls and kids throwing to base
 | * Underhand throw is an important skill for very short throws to make it easier for the receiver on the base to catch the ball. We don’t want an overhand throw from close.
* Proper technique is to transfer ball to throwing hand, push with close side leg and move body towards target as you throw
* Kids should not “wind up” by moving their throwing hand backwards before throwing – this makes it less accurate and harder to see. Instead emphasize pushing off with legs
* Throws should be short throws from either SS or 2B position to 2B
 | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPS_qQoV-OU> |
| 10 | Infielding 5 – crossover step | Solo drills1. Three ball drill – balls quite far apart, about 2 meters

Partner drills1. Coaches rolling to side (well outside of feet)

Live drills1. Coaches hitting balls and kids throwing to base
 | * Crossover footwork provides for tremendous range to help kids get in the front of balls
* Footwork is to push off of lead leg, cross rear foot over the front, land and then bring trailing leg into position
* Emphasize landing in proper triangle fielding position
* Common issue is kids “dragging” their back foot – emphasize that feet should “step” not “slide”
 | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FD-14TMFhUk> |

**Hitting Practice Plan**

Hitting practice should generally include a live hitting station, a tee station and a soft-toss station if enough coaches or parents are available. Players can rotate through the available stations and extra players can catch and pick up balls in the field. Each day should have a focus skill and a drill to reinforce it that is discussed and then used on the tee and, if applicable, with the soft toss station

* Live hitting – Coaches pitching and extra players in the field picking up hit balls. Do not use a catcher, just pick the balls up that are missed after the hitting. Place a second bucket behind second base for the balls to go into. Exchange the full bucket with the coaches empty bucket when necessary
* Tee station – Use the tee station for players to work on specific hitting drills chosen for each practice. One drill can be chosen each practice to emphasize a particular skill and shown to all players before hitting starts.
* Soft toss station – Soft toss is used to improve timing and hand-eye coordination. The coach should be kneeling at a 45 degree angle in front of the player (so balls are not coming directly from the side) and toss balls fairly flat towards the player’s front hip (so balls are not falling excessively as they come into the hitting zone)

The focus areas and drills below are set out in a progression but once all have been covered, coaches should go back and cover the same points in practices 2-5 again but with different drills

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| Practice | Focus area | Teaching points | Drills and progressions | Video resources |
| 1 | Hitting position and strike zone | * Distance from plate – A bat placed with its end at the far side of the plate should reach the line between the player’s toes. Once kids get comfortable with this distance, they can take one hand off of the bat and tap the outside corner of the plate to make sure they can reach it, but not reach too far past it
* Stance – Athletic position, feet wider than shoulder width and knees bent. A line drawn from the back toe to the front to should extend to the pitcher
* Hands – Hands should be together on the bat and held about 6” in front of the back shoulder at shoulder height. The flat part of the fist between the “punching knuckles” and the “knocking knuckles should generally be lined up
* Elbows – Elbows should be relaxed, rear elbow should not be raised as it will be dropped when the player starts to swing
 | * Just have the kids hit and try to ensure proper positioning for first practice
 | Body position<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_6zdYUBpjc>Distance from plate<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wh5UgP8mLU> |
| 2 | Loading | * Weight shift is a critical component of a strong swing
* Players need to shift weight onto back leg in preparation for swing, then shift weight forward to swing. Most players will accomplish this with a step but alternatively the front heel can be raised with the front toe remaining on the ground to simplify the swing
* Loading should be done by the player every pitch, not only for strikes. The purpose is to accomplish the setup for the swing before the player decides to swing. At higher levels, players will not be able to wait until they see a strike to load.
 | * No-Step swing – players hit with feet wide and no step, just shift weight back and swing. Can be used for tee, soft toss and live
* Step-Back swing – players stand with feet together, step back with rear foot to load weight onto the back foot, then swing. Used best with tee
* Lunge Step-Up swing – players begin in a lunge position with back foot in hitting position and front leg pulled back into lunge. Goal is to have the player engage the back leg strongly to stand up and then swing. Used best with tee
 | No-step swing<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WNOdmeVcQ8>Step back swing<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKGGp8oHtaE><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OEkDXHoqtcE> at 2Other loading videos<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMiqzG9UJs0>to 5:30 |
| 3 | Launch | * The launch position is the position immediately prior to contact with the ball after the player has transitioned from the load position. The front foot will have landed if the player is stepping, the front heel is down, the back heel is up, and the hands, shoulders, hips and back knee have started to rotate
 | * Step and pause drill – Have players take a step into their launch position, pause, and then swing. Use this position to check body position after the step. Player should keep weight back and not drop hands or collapse on front leg in particular
* Toe-Tap swing – Players shift weight to back leg and then keep weight there while they tap their front foot three times on the ground, swinging on the third tap. Drill is good to emphasize initiating the swing when the front foot lands.
 | Step and pause drill<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbqzyYYXvtM> to 2:15 |
| 4 | Contact | * At contact with the ball, players should have about a 90 degree angle between the bat and the forearm of their upper hand.
* Top hand should be palm up and bottom hand should be palm down
* We want to emphasize players trying to hit the “inside” of the baseball which means that hands will be equal to or in front of the bat head at impact.
* If wrists release early (“rolling over”) and bat head moves ahead of hands at impact, players will hit the “outside” of the ball and will generally hit a weak ground ball.
 | * Fence drill – Have players take a stick and stand about the length of the stick from the fence. Ask them to swing but try not to hit the fence. If they can do it, have them take a tiny step in and try again. Get them to see how close they can get. This is a classic drill but can cause problems too.
* Foam roller drill – put a tall foam roller about 6” outside and behind the tee. Have players try to hit the ball but not the foam roller. This will require them to have their hands ahead of the bat head, if they roll their wrist and the bat head moves ahead of their hands they will hit the roller
 | Fence drill<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NnYgfrZYHw>Foam roller drill<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlCP7FCGi3s> at 7:06 |
| 5 | Extension | * The bat needs to stay in the hitting zone as long as possible and move towards the pitcher
* A common problem wit the fence drill is that, although it teaches kids to keep their hands in front of the bat, it also causes them to pull the at out of the strike zone
 | * Point-At-Pitcher – Have kids take a swing and finish with the arms and bat all pointing straight forwards towards where the pitcher would be.
* Foam roller drill – place a tall foam roller about 6” outside and in front of the tee. Have the kids try to hit both the ball and then the roller
 | Point-at-pitcher<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_8VXf61VGzo> |
| 6 | Follow through | * Players need to hit through the ball. We want them to focus on accelerating their bat through the ball instead of decelerating into the ball
* Emphasizing the finish point of the swing is helpful. Players should be encouraged to finish with the bat around their back and hands between the head and shoulder and parallel to the ground
* Finishing low (around the lower back) with bat pointing down is indicative of a player that is rolling their wrists over early during contact
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