

# 12U Baseball Practice Plan: 90-Minute Template

12U

Practice Plans

Coach Nick &amp; the YSC Coaching Team

Last spring I inherited a 12U team mid-season from a coach who had to step away. Their first practice under me told the whole story — not because the kids lacked talent, but because they had never had a written plan. One group took batting practice while twelve players stood in the outfield with nothing meaningful to do. By the time I got things organized, we had burned thirty minutes and lost three kids who left early with their parents.

A well-built 12U baseball practice plan eliminates that problem before the first player walks through the gate.

A complete 90-minute 12U practice runs in five blocks: a 10-minute dynamic warm-up, a 15-minute arm care and throwing progression, a 40-minute three-station rotation covering hitting, infield/outfield, and pitcher/catcher development, a 15-minute team defense and situational segment, and a 10-minute cool-down with team recap. That structure keeps every player active every minute, delivers enough volume in each skill area, and finishes before attention runs out.

Twelve-year-olds can sustain sharp focus for 8–12 minute drill blocks — longer than younger kids, shorter than coaches assume. The most common mistake we see is spending the first 25 minutes on a leisurely warm-up that eats into skill time and lets the group mentally disengage before real work even starts.

## Why 12U Is the Bridge Year

At 12, players are in the last development window before travel ball and middle school programs begin separating rosters. Skills that were forgivable at 10U — a slow exchange at shortstop, a hitch in the swing, a flat arm path — start costing real playing time within a year. But most 12U coaches are still running 8U-style practice: loosely organized station work with no specific coaching cues and no accountability to mechanics.

This is also the age where athletic development begins to directly influence performance. Players who have thrown and swung since they were five often carry compensatory movement patterns — a short arm path to compensate for limited hip rotation, a stiff front side that loads the elbow because the trunk is not generating enough rotational speed. A good practice plan addresses those underlying movement patterns, not just baseball-specific repetitions.

We also use 12U as the year we start introducing game-pressure competition inside drills. A swing that looks clean on the tee will break down the first time the count goes full in a tournament if the player has never practiced under any pressure. Timed drill rounds, small in-practice competitions, and situation simulations all belong in a 12U plan.

## The Full 90-Minute Practice Plan

Here is the template we use. Adjust individual segments by five minutes if your practice window is 80 or 100 minutes, but keep the proportions the same.

**Segment 1 — Dynamic Warm-Up (10 min)** No static stretching before throwing. Move through high knees, lateral shuffles, hip circles, and arm circles across the foul line and back. Add single-leg balance holds — 10 seconds per leg — during arm circles to build ankle and hip stability before anyone picks up a ball. Finish with four 20-yard buildups at 70–80% effort. Coaching cue: "Your arm needs your hips and legs warm before we throw hard — movement first, stretching after."

**Segment 2 — Arm Care and Throwing Progression (15 min)** Start at 30 feet with wrist flips in a power position for 2 minutes to groove backspin and finger pressure. Move to 45 feet for crow hops at medium effort, focusing on hip-shoulder separation. Open to game-catch distance at full effort for 5 minutes. Pitchers finish with a set of 8 pull-downs from 90 feet. If you have lateral mini-

bands, have position players do 10 steps each direction before wrist flips to pre-activate the glutes they will use in every throw. Coaching cue: "Fingers on top, drive your hip through first — the arm follows the hip."

**Segment 3A — Hitting Station (13 min)** Split your roster into three groups and rotate every 13 minutes. Group A works a two-tee sequence: first tee set at the ideal contact point to groove extension, second tee placed 6 inches in front to force a through-the-ball finish. Four rounds of 8 swings per hitter. Grab an adjustable youth batting tee at [theranchsports.com](http://theranchsports.com) — coaches get 10% off and there is no sales tax, which means you can dial the height precisely for every hitter instead of fighting a fixed tee all practice. Coaching cue: "Back shoulder down, barrel to the ball, hands finish above the shoulder."

**Segment 3B — Infield and Outfield Station (13 min)** Infielders take four rounds of 10 groundballs each: two backhands, two forehands, three slow rollers where the exchange matters most, and three routine medium-speed hops. Outfielders work drop-step reads off a coach who points direction before the toss, then run two rounds of relay throws to a cutoff positioned at shortstop depth. Coaching cue for infield: "Glove to the ground and let the ball come up to you — do not stab down at it." Coaching cue for outfield: "Crossover first, get your angle early, attack the ball moving forward."

**Segment 3C — Pitcher and Catcher Development (13 min)** Pitchers throw a focused bullpen of 15–20 pitches maximum: two-seam fastball, change-up, and curveball if they have one. Catchers work framing from a receiving stance with a coach soft-tossing from 15 feet, targeting the edges of the zone. If pitchers are unavailable due to recent game appearances, convert this block to baserunning: runner at first reads a walking lead while a coach signals or holds, and the runner practices secondary reads and aggressive first steps toward second. Coaching cue for pitchers: "Back hip drives through the ball — velocity lives in the lower half, not the arm."

**Segment 4 — Team Defense and Situational Work (15 min)** Choose one scenario per practice. Runners on first and third with nobody out: what does every fielder do on a ground ball? Bunt coverage with a runner at first: who crashes, who takes third, who covers first base? Walk through the scenario at half speed once with verbal coaching, then run one full-speed rep. By the third week, add live base runners and contact off a coach toss. This is where individual skill from stations converts into baseball IQ. Coaching cue: "Talk before the pitch — if every fielder knows the play before it happens, nobody freezes when it does."

**Segment 5 — Cool-Down and Team Recap (10 min)** Light jog along the foul line, then static stretch circuit: hamstring hold, hip flexor lunge, quad pull, and shoulder cross-body. Close with two minutes of team feedback — one thing we executed well, one adjustment for next practice. Keep the ratio at least 3-to-1 positive. Coaching cue: "Stretch what you used. Your arm and hip flexors do not clock out the moment you walk off the field."

## Building Athleticism Into Practice, Not Alongside It

Most 12U practice plans are pure baseball repetitions, and that is a gap worth closing at this age. Hip mobility, lateral quickness, and rotational power all respond well to training at 12 — and those adaptations carry directly into throwing velocity, bat speed, and defensive range. You do not need extra time. You need to replace the low-value parts of your existing warm-up with movement prep that actually transfers.

We embed the following into every practice: lateral band walks before throwing to activate the glutes needed for hip drive, med ball rotational tosses in both directions in place of standard trunk twists, and single-leg balance work during arm care to build proprioception in the ankle and hip. I had a shortstop a couple seasons back who could not close range to his backhand. His footwork was correct — the problem was he could not drive off his right foot to cut laterally. Two weeks of lateral band resistance work in our warm-up, and his range opened by a full step. Baseball repetitions alone would not have fixed that; it required training the movement pattern underneath the skill.

For athletes under 12, this principle is even more important. Keep drill work sport-specific to baseball at 12U, but build multi-directional movement into every warm-up and cool-down so the body can actually execute what the baseball mind is asking it to do.

## Pitch Count Discipline During Practice

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Bullpen sessions are where pitch count discipline most commonly collapses. A 12U pitcher who threw 45 pitches in a Saturday game shows up Tuesday and throws another 40 in the bullpen because it was "just practice." By Thursday they are stiff, and by the weekend tournament they are not themselves on the mound.

Our rule: pitchers do not exceed 20 bullpen pitches during practice within three days of a game appearance. During heavy tournament stretches, they skip the live bullpen entirely and use Segment 3C for flat-ground mechanics — towel drills and pull-downs with no live delivery. Tracking this in your practice plan template is what actually makes the rule stick. For our full pitching schedule framework and age-appropriate pitch count guidelines by level, see our baseball coaching hub.

## Coaching Cues That Actually Stick

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The best cues at this age are physical and immediate. Twelve-year-olds can process a short metaphor if it is anchored to something they recently felt in their body. "Your elbow leads your hand to the target" sticks better than "pronate on release." "Drive something on the outfield fence" sticks better than "hip-shoulder separation on finish." Simple, concrete, and connected to a specific physical sensation.

We keep a short cue sheet on the clipboard and limit each player to two cues per practice. If you are giving every player four corrections per session, you are not coaching — you are creating movement paralysis. Pick the one thing that unlocks the most improvement for each kid, repeat it for two weeks, and only then move to the next correction. Twelve-year-olds can integrate one real change per week. Give them the space to do it.