# 8U Baseball Drills: 8 Fixes for What Breaks in Games

8U | Drills | Coach Nick & the YSC Coaching Team

Second inning, bases loaded, and our shortstop fields a clean ground ball. He looks at second. He looks at first. He looks at me. By the time he throws it — to third, where nobody was standing — two runs had scored. Nothing was wrong with his glove or his arm. He had just never practiced deciding.

That play is 8U baseball in one sentence. The kids can do more than they could at 6U, but the game falls apart between the skills: the throw after the catch, the decision after the ground ball, the swing against a live arm instead of a tee.

**The short answer:** the best 8U baseball drills are short (8–12 minutes), high-rep, and built around a game problem — throwing accuracy, catching without fear, fielding into a throw, timing a moving pitch, and knowing where the ball goes. Run four to five drills per 60–75 minute practice, keep groups at three or four kids, and finish every practice with a game that forces decisions.

Below are the eight drills we lean on most with 7- and 8-year-olds, grouped by the problem each one fixes. For a full sequenced session, see our 8U baseball practice plan.

## What 8-Year-Olds Can (and Can't) Handle

- **Attention span:** about 8–10 minutes per task.
- **One cue at a time.** Give three cues and you get zero.
- **Lines kill practice.** Every drill below works in groups of three or four.
- **Fear is real.** Many 8U fly-ball errors are a kid protecting their face, not a skill problem.
- **Coach or machine pitch is the norm,** so hitting drills should build timing against a moving ball, not just tee mechanics.

## Problem 1: Throws Go Everywhere

### Drill 1 — Shuffle-and-Throw Line (10 min)

The most common 8U throwing flaw is the "statue throw": feet planted, all arm. A drill we picked up from a player-development coach's channel this season makes the shuffle throw the foundation. The shuffle forces the lower half to move the ball toward the target.

**Step 1 — Walk it (3 min)** Partners 30 feet apart. Thrower turns glove-side shoulder to the target, shuffles feet together twice (back foot to front foot, no crossing), then throws. Walk-speed shuffles only. Coaching cue: "Point your glove shoulder, shuffle, throw."

**Step 2 — Speed it up (4 min)** Same pattern at game speed. Partner holds the glove as a chest-high target and calls "hit" or "miss" on every throw. Move back to 40 feet once a pair hits 5 in a row. Coaching cue: "Feet go to the target first, then the ball follows."

**Step 3 — Field it, shuffle it (3 min)** Partner rolls a slow ground ball. Fielder picks it up, turns, shuffles, and throws back. This is the bridge from catch play to real infield throws. Coaching cue: "Catch, turn, shuffle — never throw flat-footed."

## Problem 2: Kids Are Scared of the Ball


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### Drill 2 — Soft-Ball Ladder (8 min)

Most 8U lists skip this one, and it matters most. I had an 8-year-old last spring who turned his head on every fly ball after taking a couple off the face in backyard catch. More fly balls didn't fix him. Taking the fear away first, then building back up, did.

> **Step 1 — Tennis ball, no glove (3 min)** Partners 15 feet apart. Toss tennis balls at chest, then above the head. Catch with two bare hands, thumbs together above the waist, pinkies together below. Coaching cue: "Watch it all the way into your hands."

> **Step 2 — Glove, soft ball (3 min)** Same tosses with gloves and a soft-core safety baseball. Glove out in front of the face, never beside it. Coaching cue: "Show me the glove logo — the ball lands right there."

> **Step 3 — Earn the real ball (2 min)** Players who catch 10 in a row with eyes on the ball move up to a regular baseball. Players who don't stay on the soft ball — no shame, no announcement. Coaching cue: "Eyes stay open until it's in the glove."

We keep a bucket of soft-core safety baseballs at every 8U practice — the cheapest confidence builder in the bag.

## Problem 3: Ground Balls Turn Into Doubles

### Drill 3 — Rapid-Fire Rollers (8 min)

> **Step 1 — Setup** Groups of three: a roller (coach or parent), a fielder, and a receiver with a bucket 30 feet away. Roller kneels 20 feet from the fielder with 10 balls.

> **Step 2 — Reps (6 min)** Roll a ball every 4–5 seconds: straight on, then a step left, then a step right. Fielder gets in front, glove down early, fields with two hands, and shuffle-throws to the receiver, who drops it in the bucket. 10 balls, then rotate. Coaching cue: "Glove on the ground before the ball gets there."

Thirty ground balls in six minutes builds a fielder. Four in a 15-minute line doesn't.

### Drill 4 — Where Does It Go? (10 min)

This fixes the shortstop from the opening story. We almost never see it on 8U drill lists, yet decision-making is what loses 8U games.

> **Step 1 — Call the situation (4 min)** Infielders at their positions. Before every ground ball, the coach calls the situation out loud: "Nobody on," "Runner on first," "Bases loaded." Fielder must yell where the ball is going BEFORE the coach rolls it. Coaching cue: "Know it before it's hit."

> **Step 2 — Add runners (6 min)** Put live runners on base who run on contact. Fielder fields and makes the throw they called. If the call was right, it counts even if the throw misses. Coaching cue: "Nobody on, go to first. Force at second? Take the easy out."

Keep it to three rules all season: nobody on, throw to first; runner on first, take second or first; bases loaded, home or the nearest base.

## Problem 4: Fly Balls Drop

### Drill 5 — Racket Flies (8 min)

Fungo work at 8U is slow and inconsistent. A tennis racket and a can of tennis balls gives you 40 catchable fly balls in eight minutes.

> **Step 1 — Straight up (3 min)** Coach hits tennis balls straight up from 20 feet in front of a line of three players. Player calls "Ball!


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**Step 2 — Move to it (5 min)** Coach hits balls a few steps left, right, and over the player's head. Player turns and runs to the spot, not backpedals. Coaching cue: "Turn and run, then look up."

## Problem 5: Hitters Can't Time a Moving Ball

### Drill 6 — Front Toss "Yes/No" (10 min)

Tee work builds a swing, not timing. Hitting coaches covering the jump from coach pitch to kid pitch keep stressing the same thing: track the ball first, swing second, and expect averages to drop when live pitching starts. We'd rather start that tracking now.

**Step 1 — Track only (3 min)** Coach front-tosses wiffle balls from 15 feet behind an L-screen. Hitter takes a stance and does NOT swing. On every toss, they call "yes" (strike) or "no" (ball) out loud before it crosses the plate. Coaching cue: "See it out of my hand."

**Step 2 — Swing at yeses (5 min)** Same tosses. Hitter swings only at pitches they called "yes." Mix in a few slow and a few firm tosses. Coaching cue: "Get your foot down early, then let it travel."

**Step 3 — Speed bump (2 min)** Last ten tosses come a little firmer and from a higher release, closer to what kid pitch looks like. Coaching cue: "Same swing, earlier start."

## Problem 6: Baserunners Get Doubled Off and Run Past Bases

### Drill 7 — Run Through, Round, Freeze (8 min)

**Step 1 — Run through first (3 min)** Cone 10 feet past first base in foul territory. Runner swings an empty-handed swing at home, drops the "bat," and sprints through the bag to the cone. Touch the front of the bag, never slow down. Coaching cue: "Run THROUGH it, not TO it."

**Step 2 — Round it (3 min)** Coach yells "Round it!" Runner makes a slight banana curve before first, touches the inside corner, and takes three hard steps toward second. Coaching cue: "Bend early, touch inside, look for the ball."

**Step 3 — Freeze on a line drive (2 min)** Runner leads off at first. Coach tosses a ball in the air. If it's caught, runner gets back. If it drops, runner goes. Coaching cue: "Line drive, freeze. Ground ball, go."

## Problem 7: Practice Feels Like School

### Drill 8 — Three-Base Backyard Game (12–15 min)

A player-development coach we follow argues youth practices have become too structured, costing kids the baseball IQ they used to pick up in backyard pickup games. We agree, so every practice ends with a small-sided game where the kids make the decisions.

**Step 1 — Setup** Three bases (home, first, and a "second" placed where third would be) at 45 feet. Wiffle balls and a light bat. Teams of 4–5. Coach pitches underhand from 20 feet.

**Step 2 — Rules (12 min)** Every hitter gets three swings. Fielders get an out by stepping on the base the runner is going to — or tagging them. The fielding team decides where to throw. Coaches only talk between innings. Three outs or six batters, whichever


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You'll see Drill 4 show up here without anyone prompting it. That's the point. When your group is ready to move up, our 10U baseball drills library is the next step.

## Build Athleticism, Not Just Baseball

At 8U, the best players are usually the best movers. Fold skipping, bear crawls, and lateral shuffles into every warm-up. Our guide to athletic development for youth athletes ages 6-10 has a full menu of movement games that slot into a baseball warm-up.

## Sample 60-Minute 8U Practice Using These Drills

| Time | Block | Drill |
|---|---|---|
| 0:00–0:08 | Warm-up | Skips, shuffles, bear crawls |
| 0:08–0:18 | Throwing | Drill 1 — Shuffle-and-Throw Line |
| 0:18–0:26 | Catching | Drill 2 — Soft-Ball Ladder |
| 0:26–0:36 | Stations (rotate) | Drill 3 — Rapid-Fire Rollers / Drill 6 — Front Toss Yes/No |
| 0:36–0:44 | Fielding IQ | Drill 4 — Where Does It Go? |
| 0:44–0:57 | Game | Drill 8 — Three-Base Backyard Game |
| 0:57–1:00 | Huddle | One specific compliment per player |

Swap in Drills 5 and 7 on alternate weeks.

For more ways to structure 8U practice and coach this age, see our baseball coaching hub.


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