

Indoor Baseball Practice Plan: Rainy Day Gym Drills

Practice Plans

Coach Nick & the YSC Coaching Team

It was last October — our 12U club team had a tournament on Saturday, and Friday was supposed to be our final sharpening session before game day. The rain started at noon and didn't stop. By 3 PM we were texting parents: "Gym night, not field." Twenty-two kids, one elementary school cafeteria, no cages, a ceiling that maxed out at about 14 feet, and a freshly-waxed wood floor.

We ran one of the most productive practices of the fall.

The key to a good rainy day gym practice is planning for the space you actually have, not a fantasy facility. Run four simultaneous stations, keep rotations tight with a timer, and fill one of those stations with mental reps and situational review. Athletes can leave a gym day sharper than a field day if the plan is right.

Why Most Gym Days Fail

The mistake I see most coaches make is showing up at the gym and improvising. They grab the bag of balls, set up a tee in one corner, and let athletes drift. Thirty minutes in, half the team is leaning against the wall while two kids take turns on a tee that nobody is coaching. The gym day becomes a throwaway.

The second mistake is trying to recreate a field practice indoors. Some things — live BP, fly balls, full-distance throwing — are not safe in a standard gym regardless of how experienced your athletes are. One errant ball into a bleacher at 12 feet costs you the gym for the season. You need a plan built around gym constraints, not one that ignores them.

Before You Walk In: Know Your Space

Answer three questions before you design a single station:

Ceiling height — Under 12 feet: no live swings, no fly balls, underhand tosses only. Over 14 feet: soft toss is safe. Over 18 feet: you can run light cage work with foam balls.

Floor surface — Waxed wood or polished concrete: use tennis balls or foam balls for any hitting, rubber-soled shoes only (no cleats). Rubber or artificial turf: dimple balls are fine with reduced swing speeds.

Width available — Under 30 feet: one hitting lane maximum. Over 40 feet: two or three side-by-side lanes work.

Once you know those constraints, the plan writes itself. Work into the space, not around it.

The 90-Minute Indoor Baseball Practice Plan

This plan runs four simultaneous stations of five or six athletes each. Works for 10U through high school; simplified versions for 8U are noted below. **Rotation: 18 minutes per station, two-minute transition.** Use a phone timer with an audible alarm — when it sounds, everyone rotates. No exceptions, no "just a few more swings."

Station 1 — Tee Work and Video Feedback (18 min) Set up one or two adjustable tees — a quality adjustable batting tee at theranchsports.com works great here and ships free; our link saves you 10% with no sales tax. Each hitter takes 10 cuts into a net or ball-return screen, then a partner films two swings on a phone before the next athlete goes. Coach the video together: load timing and hip turn, not power or exit velocity. Goal is deliberate reps with feedback, not volume. Coaching cue: "Hips beat hands — let me see the hips clear before the arms extend."

Station 2 — Soft Toss into Net (18 min) Partner soft toss from the side — knee-height underhand flip, never overhand, never from in front. Use tennis balls on hard gym floors, dimple balls on rubber surfaces. Four athletes rotate: one hitting, one tossing, two behind the net ready to swap in. Enforce a short stride and a compact swing path; the low ceiling means over-swinging is immediately punished by the ceiling light. Drill variation for younger athletes: stationary tee with two-hand grip focus before they get a live toss partner. Coaching cue: "Short to the ball, long through it — no casting out front."

Station 3 — Fielding Footwork and Transfer Drill (18 min) No live throws at distance. A coach or player rolls ground balls underhand from 10 feet and focuses entirely on the fielder's footwork: first-step read, glove angle at contact, and the transfer from glove to throwing hand. The thrower does NOT throw the ball back at full distance — they flip it back underhand or walk it back. Run 20 rollers per athlete, then finish with a two-minute bare-hand drill: slow rollers, two hands together, emphasizing a soft catch. This drill overloads the fielding mechanics that get sloppy late in fall season. Coaching cue: "Attack the ball — if you are still moving toward it at contact, you are right. If you are waiting, you are already late."

Station 4 — Situational Review and Mental Reps (18 min) This is the station that separates the teams that stay sharp indoors from the ones that rust. Pull up one short video clip on a tablet or laptop — a pitcher they will face soon, or a two-minute clip of a baserunning play. Then run verbal situational reps: coach calls out a scenario ("Runner on second, nobody out, slow ground ball to the right side — what does every player do?"), and athletes answer before you give the answer. The rule is: every athlete on the station must verbalize their assignment, not just the one who knows it. Follow up with "what if it is hit to right field instead?" These reps take three minutes each and build game-situation awareness that no drill can replicate. Ten minutes of this done consistently through a fall of gym days is the difference between a team that executes in April and one that is still confused at the cutoff in July. Coaching cue for coaches: ask the question, pause, let them sweat it — correct the reasoning before you correct the answer.

Station Rotation Without Chaos

Post the rotation schedule before athletes arrive — text it to an assistant coach to put on a whiteboard or tape it to the gym door. The two biggest time wasters on gym days are athletes who do not know where to go next and stations that run long because there is no hard stop.

When the timer sounds, call "Rotate!" clearly and athletes move one station clockwise. Have a designated coach or team leader at each station so no one is waiting for instructions when they arrive. The transition window is two minutes — enough for athletes to grab water and move, not enough to lose the energy.

For younger groups (8U–10U), simplify to two or three stations and replace Station 4 with a "coach chat" circle: athletes sit with a coach and walk through one baserunning rule or game situation verbally. Our 8U baseball practice plan follows a similar low-complexity station format that adapts directly to a gym.

What to Cut on a Gym Day

Every gym plan should include a short list of what NOT to run. We have seen all of these go wrong:

- **No overhand throwing at distance** in a standard gym with a low ceiling. One errant throw into the bleachers and you lose the gym.
- **No live hard-ball batting practice** without a full cage, a 20-foot ceiling clearance, and zero athletes in the hitting path. "It will be fine" is not a plan.
- **No fly-ball or pop-fly work** in a gym — even a 16-foot ceiling makes it unpredictable and dangerous.
- **No cleats on waxed wood floors.** Turf shoes or socks only, or you are looking at a serious knee injury from a plant-and-slip that should never have happened.

Anything you cannot run safely in the space gets replaced with a mental-rep block or extra time on the tee. Athletes will remember a good film review longer than a chaotic drill that scared parents in the stands.

Athletic Development Add-Ons

Gym days are actually ideal for athletic development work that gets cut when field time is full. Add a five-minute block at the start or end of practice for:

Lateral shuffle pattern — five shuffles each direction, explode off the outside foot. Builds first-step quickness that transfers to every position. No ball, no equipment, just space.

Hip hinge pattern — 10 bodyweight reps, emphasizing the same hip load position used at the plate and in the fielding stance. Most youth athletes do not hinge — they bend at the waist. Five minutes of guided reps in a gym builds the pattern faster than trying to correct it mid-drill.

Reaction drop — a partner holds a tennis ball at shoulder height and drops it without warning; the athlete must catch it before the second bounce. Works reaction time and hand-eye in a space no bigger than six square feet.

These three movements take under five minutes and pay off all spring. If you have an agility ladder in the equipment bag, pair this gym plan with our agility ladder drills for kids — a ladder on a gym floor is one of the best uses of a no-field day.

Making This a Regular Part of Your Fall Season

The teams that stay sharp through fall and arrive at spring tryouts ahead of the field are the ones who treat every gym day as intentional practice time — not a makeshift day off with a batting tee in the corner. The plan above works in any gym, for any age group, with whatever equipment fits in the bag.

When you do have cage access, pair this plan with our batting cage station ideas for youth baseball practice — same four-station rotation logic, different drills. The two plans are designed as complements so athletes experience consistent structure regardless of where they practice that week.