

# FLLGS

## A Ball Practice Plan

# General Manager Guidelines

When you get your roster be sure to contact all of your parents as soon as possible and introduce yourself. Parents are often just as excited as the girls to start the season and this is a great time to invite your parents to participate. All a parent needs to do to participate is submit a volunteer application and a signed Code of Conduct to the Safety Officer.

Give the parents your practice schedule and explain how important their help can be to the success of the season. Always have an open line of communication with your parents and provide them with an easy way to contact you (either cell or e-mail). They are trusting you with the safety of their daughter and we expect you to take your responsibility seriously.

Direct your parents to our website [www.flqs.org](http://www.flqs.org) and explain this is where their season schedule and team page will be located. Be sure to direct them to our contacts page where they can find contact information for your Division's Commissioner, Safety Officer, Player Agent and League President.

# A Division

At this level girls will be in their first or second year playing the wonderful game of softball. Most girls will need instruction on the very basics of the game, from which hand to put the glove on to which way to run the bases. You have the very special honor of being many of these girls' First Softball Coach.

The A Division is almost exclusively an instructional level and this includes the games. Score is not important and the game should be stopped frequently to demonstrate proper technique in the field or at bat or to explain the rules of the game. Instruction on any point of a game should be give to both teams at once. Think of game settings as an on-the-field classroom.

Each player should be rotated through every position on the field during games. Make sure to field only nine defensive players (or possibly a fourth outfielder). Only normally positioned infielders should be used. Free substitution is expected and no player should sit defensively more than one inning until all players have sat at least one inning.

Teams will use a continuous batting order and bat through the line-up each inning. Make sure to change or reverse the batting order each inning so the same player is not always leading off or ending the team's time at bat.

## First Practice

First practice is the time to get to know the girls. Commit yourself to learning all of your player's names by the end of the practice.

A nice ice breaker is the "**Hot Potato, Name Game**". Have the girls form a circle with you and your coaches joining in. Once in the circle everyone goes around and introduces themselves. Then you grab a ball and the girls have to soft toss (underhand) the ball from girl to girl in no particular order in the circle. Before a girl passes the ball they have to say the name of the girl they are passing the ball to. The girls have fun and learn their teammate's names very quickly.

When the Name Game is complete it is a good time to take your first water break and explain the ground rules for FLLGS and your team. Make it a positive experience and tell them what you expect from the girls whenever you get together.

Ground rules are very important in maintaining control of your team at all times. You might be tempted to skip this step but it is critical to the success of your team that the girls know what is expected of them. All children have a tendency to lose focus when in a group and our girls are no different. Always demonstrate patience and remain composed when addressing your girls. Keep it fun, but remember that above all else you are responsible for the girl's safety and need to take charge.

Here are some basic rules you should follow:

- Have fun practicing and playing the game. Softball time is softball time.
- Always respect your teammates, coaches, umpires and opponents.
- Always try your best.
- Don't worry about the score.
- Nobody else talks when a coach is speaking (this can unravel very quickly so stay on top of it).
- Always hustle to all stations including water breaks.
- Never leave the field at end of practice or game without permission from a coach.

Coaches Notes:

# General Practice Outline

90 to 120 minutes Total

## **Warm-ups & Stretching (10-15 minutes)**

- Light jog around the bases. Not a race & not for speed.
- Form running from base to base
  - o High knees
  - o Butt kicks
  - o Lunges
  - o Statue of Liberty
  - o Shuffles
  
- Afterwards call them into a circle & have them stretch out there arms
  - o Forward arm circles
  - o Backwards arm circles
  - o Flex wrists up
  - o Flex wrists down
  - o Arm over head & pull down.
  - o Arm bars across chest
  
- **Water break**

Coaches notes:

## **Practice Stations (15 to 20 minutes each station)**

Put the girls into groups of 3 or 4 with 3 to 4 different stations, depending on number of coaches and rotate them through all stations.

### **STATION #1: Hitting T-station.**

It would be preferable for the girls to hit into a hitting net. If a net is not available, hit into open space or the backstop. The Tee should be positioned on the front edge of where home plate would be located (use a throw down plate if available) as that is where contact should be made. Make sure the girls line up even and square to the plate. You can put your foot imprints in the batters box so girls know where to stand. As the weeks progress you can incorporate soft toss into the backstop then soft toss into the field where the fielders field the balls and throw them back to the coach.

### **STATION #2: Throwing station.**

Girls here can throw into the outfield from one of the foul lines. If you have more parent volunteers the players can throw to them. The ball should be held by the laces in a 4 seam grip. They should step with their glove foot and get their body into a T position with the ball facing down and away from their body and with their glove pointing towards the target. As they throw the ball at a three quarter angle their bodies should rotate back square to the target.

### **STATION #3: Fielding station-ground ball.**

Girls should get on one knee and “snatch” the ball up. Player should have her glove on the ground palm up and open. If you have four girls you can have them pair up and roll the ball to one another. As weeks progress have the girls get into an “Athletic Position”, feet shoulder width apart, bent knees, glove out in front and low to the ground.

### **STATION #4: Fielding station-thrown or fly ball.**

Explain to the girls when to catch the ball with “fingers up or fingers down.” Anytime the ball is over the girl’s waist fingers should be pointing up towards the sky. Anything below the waist girls should have fingers pointing down towards the ground. A coach should toss the ball to the girls one at a time ensuring proper technique.

As the weeks progress Stations 2, 3 & 4 can be combined into one drill where they have to field the ball properly using the “Fairfield Crocodile”, step and then throw the ball to a coach.

- **Water Break**

### **Base Running (5 to 10 minutes)**

Have the girls line up at home plate. Girls should swing without a bat, and run straight through 1<sup>st</sup> base. One of your coaches should stand by the outfield grass & have the girls give them a “high five” after they run through the bag. Make sure the girls don’t start to slow down until two full strides through the bag.

### **End of Practice Running Drill (5 minutes)**

Try to end each practice with something fun and energetic. You can then return the girls to their parents with their blood pumping and energized.

“Peanut Butter & Jelly” is a fun relay race girls love to play. Line up half the girls at 2<sup>nd</sup> base and the other half the girls at home plate. Try to split the girls evenly by speed.

The first girl at home and the first girl on 2<sup>nd</sup> base leave at the same time running counter clockwise around the bases returning back to where they started and tags the second girl who now runs around the bases. The first team to have all the girls back to there original starting point wins the drill.

The above four stations and running drills should be the basis for all of your practices. You can modify them to keep the girls interested but always dedicate the bulk of your practices to the basics done properly: Throwing, catching, fielding, hitting and running.

- **Water break and chat time.**

Coaches notes:

## **Second Practice and beyond**

As your team progresses you should introduce game situations. You will have to teach them all aspects of the game. Assume they have never even seen a softball or baseball game. If you are unsure of any rule or game situation yourself just ask. We are all here to help.

### **Fielding:**

Set a proper infield and outfield and hit easy ground balls to the girls while they are in proper positions. Teach them “where’s the play?” You will eventually add runners to this drill, but not too soon. Take it slowly so the girls learn in a relaxed setting before they are pressured to get the ball to the base before the base runner.

Take your time and be patient. It is more important that the girls know where to make the play than it is to actually being able to make the play. Their bodies will catch up to their brains. Teach them to play the game properly and give them time.

### **Hitting:**

Introduce the girls to hitting live pitching from a coach. Again, don’t rush it. Spend more time hitting off the T to develop proper technique and muscle memory. When the girls have the basics, begin throwing live BP. Make sure to use this time to develop your own skills. The pressure can build on a coach who cannot find home plate during a game!

Coaches Notes.