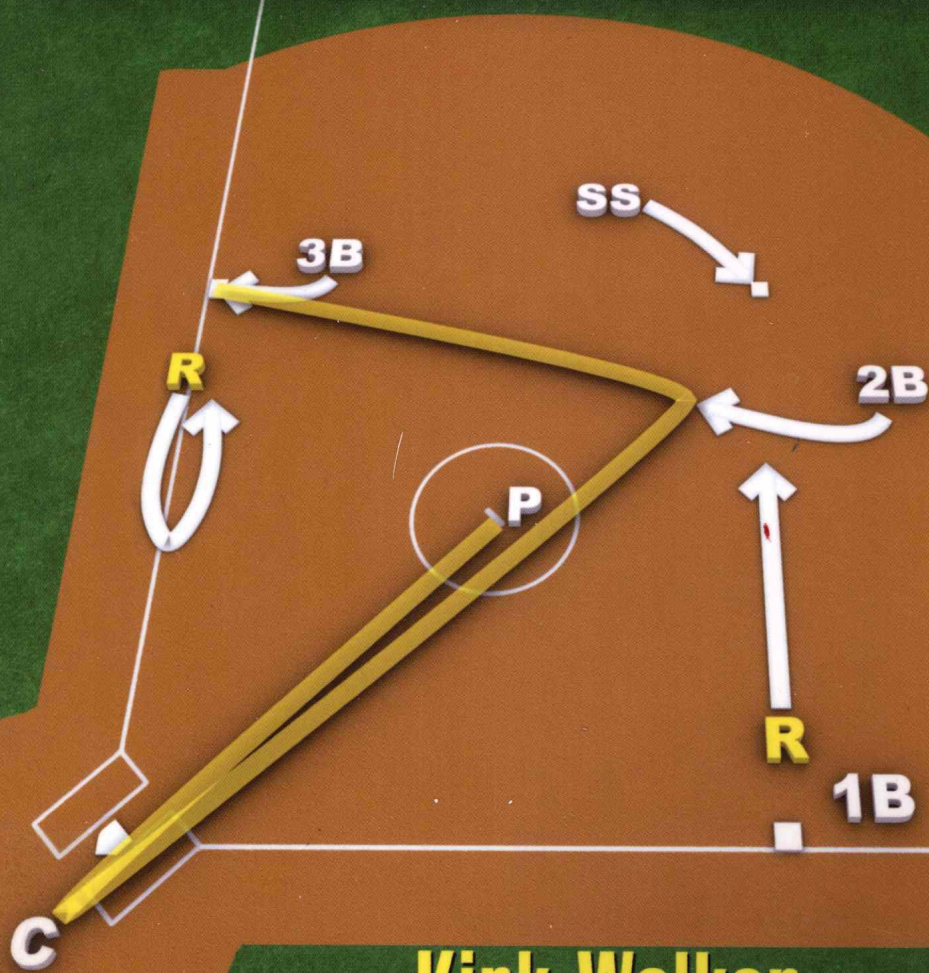


# The Softball Drill Book

Over 175 drills for individual and team play



**Kirk Walker**  
Editor

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*the*  
**Softball  
Drill Book**

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**KIRK WALKER**  
**EDITOR**



***Human Kinetics***

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—Kirk Walker

# Drill Finder

Drill #	Drill	Offensive skills		Defensive skills		Communication	Fitness building	# of players	# of coaches	Page #
		Bunting	Hitting	Base running	Throwing					
CHAPTER 1										
1	Walking Knee Hug						ST	I, SG, T	0	6
2	Walking Tin Soldier						ST	I, SG, T	0	7
3	Forward Lunge With Overhead Reach						ST	I, SG, T	0	8
4	Backward Skip With External Hip Rotation						ST	I, SG, T	0	9
5	Twisting Push-Up						ST	I, SG, T	0	10
6	High-Knee Run						A	I, SG, T	0	12
7	Scissors						A	I	0	13
8	Hopscotch						A	I	0	14
9	Ball Drop, Forward Start						A	I	1	15
10	One-Leg Hop Into Sprint						A	I, SG, T	0	16
11	Side Pass With Medicine Ball						S	I	0	17
12	Alternating Lunge and Twist With Medicine Ball						S	I	0	18
13	Russian Twist						S	I	0	19
14	Jackknife and Push-Up Combo						S	I	0	20
15	Rotator Cuff Series						S	I	0	22
16	Trap Series						S	I	0	24
17	Gold Rush						C	I, SG, T	1	26

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*Number of players:* I = Individual; SG = Small group; T = Team

Drill #	Drill	Offensive skills		Defensive skills			Communication	Fitness building	# of players	# of coaches	Page #	
		Bunting	Hitting	Base running	Throwing	Receiving						Pitching
CHAPTER 2												
18	Star				X	X		X	C	SG, T	0	30
19	Continuous Blocking					X			C	I	1	31
20	Down-Ups					X			C	I	0	32
21	Fly Ball Machine					X			C	I, SG	2	33
22	Range				X	X			C	I, SG	1-2	34
23	Pop Fouls and Bunts				X	X			C	I	1	35
24	Warm-Up Throwing				X	X		X	C	SG, T	0	36
25	Beat the Ball								S	SG	1-2	38
26	Continuous Fielding				X	X			C	I, SG	1	39
27	Shortstop Combo				X	X		X	C	SG	1	40
28	Second Baseman Flip				X	X			C	SG	1	41
29	Hard and Fast				X	X			C	SG	0	42
30	Take the Extra Base			X					C	SG, T	1	43
CHAPTER 3												
31	Tennis Ball Bounce				X	X				SG, T	0	49
32	Training Paddle					X				I, SG, T	1	50
33	Fountain					X			A	SG, T	1	52
34	Throw, Run, Catch					X			C	SG, T	1	54
35	Reaction					X			R	I, SG, T	1	56
36	Popcorn					X			R	SG, T	1	57
37	Running Box				X	X			F	SG, T	0	58
38	Shoestring					X			F	SG, T	1	59
39	Barrier Catch					X				I, SG, T	1	60
40	Triangle				X	X			C	SG, T	1	61
41	Tag and Force Plays					X				I, SG	1	62

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Drill #	Drill	Offensive skills		Defensive skills			Communication	Fitness building	# of players	# of coaches	Page #
		Bunting	Hitting	Base running	Throwing	Receiving					
CHAPTER 4											
42	Wrist Snaps				X				SG, T	0	65
43	Lying Wrist Snaps				X	X			I, SG, T	0	66
44	Wrist Snaps Using a Striped Ball				X	X			SG, T	0	67
45	One-Knee Throwing				X	X			SG, T	0	68
46	Bucket Throws				X				I, SG, T	1	70
47	Long-Hop Throws				X	X			SG, T	0	71
48	Front Flips				X	X		C	SG, T	0	72
49	Backhand Tosses				X	X			SG, T	0	73
50	Throwing on the Run				X	X		C	SG, T	0	74
51	Relay Throws				X	X		X, C	SG, T	0	75
52	Speed Throws				X	X		Q	SG, T	0	76
53	Four-Corner Throws				X	X		X	SG, T	0	77
54	Star Throws				X	X		X	SG, T	0	78
CHAPTER 5											
55	Plows			X				S	SG, T	0	81
56	Rubber Bands			X				S	SG, T	0	82
57	Take a Lap			X				C	I, SG, T	0	83
58	Times			X				C	I, SG, T	1	84
59	One Base			X				C	SG, T	1	85
60	Work-Up			X				C	SG, T	1	86
61	Leads and Returns			X				C	SG, T	1	87
62	4-3-2-1			X				C	SG, T	1	88
63	Clap and Go			X				C	SG, T	1	89
64	Around the Horn			X				C	SG, T	1+	90
65	Two at a Time			X				X, C	SG, T	2+	91
66	Tag-Ups			X				X, C	SG, T	2+	92

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Drill #	Drill	Offensive skills			Defensive skills			Communication	Fitness building	# of players	# of coaches	Page #
		Bunting	Hitting	Base running	Throwing	Receiving	Pitching					
CHAPTER 6												
67	Dry Swings		X							I, SG	0	95
68	Mirror for Hitters		X							I, SG	1	96
69	Incline Swings		X							I, SG	0	97
70	Batting Tee		X							I, SG	0	98
71	Step Back		X							I, SG	1	99
72	Walk Through		X							I, SG	0	100
73	Self-Toss		X							I, SG	0	101
74	Angle Toss		X							I, SG	1	102
75	Front Toss		X							I, SG	1	103
76	Bottom Hand Extension		X							I, SG	1	104
77	Drive the Tunnel		X							I, SG	1	105
78	No Pop, No Pull		X							I, SG	1	106
79	Situational Hitting		X							I, SG	1	107
80	Stand-In		X							I, SG	0	108
81	Live Pitching, Head to Head		X							I, SG	0	109
CHAPTER 7												
82	Shadow Bunting	X								SG, T	1	114
83	Machine Sacrifice Bunting	X								I, SG, T	1	115
84	Tee Bunts	X								I, SG, T	1	116
85	Front-Toss Bunting	X								I, SG, T	1	118
86	Location Bunting	X								I, SG, T	1	120
87	Machine Short-Game Mix	X						X		SG, T	1	121
88	Short-Game Competition	X		X	X			X		T	1-2	122
89	Game Day Squeeze Play	X		X	X			X		SG, T	1	123
90	Rapid Fire Sneaky Bunts	X								I, SG	1	124
91	Putting It All Together	X		X	X			X		T	1	125

**Key** Fitness building, C = Conditioning, F = Focus; R = Reaction; S = Strength; SP = Speed; ST = Stretching; Q = Quickness  
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Drill #	Drill	Offensive skills		Defensive skills			Communication	Fitness building	# of players	# of coaches	Page #
		Bunting	Hitting	Base running	Throwing	Receiving					
CHAPTER 8											
92	Tee Work for Slappers	X						I	0		129
93	Four Corners Off the Tee	X						I	0		130
94	Horse	X						I, SG	1		131
95	Hold the Position	X						I, SG	1		132
96	Timing for Slappers	X						I, SG	1		133
97	Knock Out	X						SG	1		134
98	Bounce	X						I	1		135
99	High-Low	X						I	1		136
100	Bat Stop	X						I	1		137
101	Mirror for Slappers	X						I	1		138
CHAPTER 9											
102	Side to Side				X			C SG, T	1		143
103	Short Hops				X			C SG, T	0		144
104	Run-Throughs				X			A SG, T	1		145
105	Receiving Balls at First Base				X			A I, SG	1		146
106	Hot Box				X	X		A I, SG	2		147
107	Ready Position and First Step				X			I, SG	1		148
108	Five-Ball Fungo				X	X		I, SG	1		149
109	Tennis Ball Circle					X		SG	1		150
110	Infield Box				X	X		SG, T	0		152
111	Double T				X	X		I, SG	1		154
CHAPTER 10											
112	Sideline to Sideline				X	X		SG, T	1		159
113	Loop					X		SG, T	2		160

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Drill #	Drill	Offensive skills		Defensive skills			Communication	Fitness building	# of players	# of coaches	Page #
		Bunting	Hitting	Base running	Throwing	Receiving	Pitching				

### CHAPTER 10 (CONTINUED)

114	Zig Zag				X	X			SG, T	1	161
115	T				X	X			SG, T	1	162
116	Around the Cones				X	X			SG	1	163
117	Balls in Between				X	X			SG, T	1	164
118	Backup				X	X			T	1	165
119	Only Line of Defense				X	X			SG	0	166
120	At the Fence				X	X			SG	1	167
121	Fielding Three Ways				X	X			I, SG	1	168
122	Off the Fence				X	X			SG, T	1	169

### CHAPTER 11

123	Resistance						X	S	I	0	173
124	One Knee						X		I	0	174
125	Slingshot Release						X		I	0	176
126	Standing Crane						X		I	0	178
127	Standing Sideways Feet Together						X		I	0	180
128	Stride Progressions						X		I	0	182
129	Swinging Crane						X		I	0	184
130	Walk-Throughs						X		I	0	186
131	Long Toss						X		I	0	187
132	Box Resistance						X		I	0	188
133	Drag Obstacle Kick						X		I	0	189
134	Football Toss						X		I	0	190
135	Target Toss						X		I	0	191
136	Tee String						X		I	0	192

**Key** *Fitness building:* C = Conditioning; F = Focus; R = Reaction; S = Strength; SP = Speed; ST = Stretching; Q = Quickness  
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Drill #	Drill	Offensive skills			Defensive skills			Communication	Fitness building	# of players	# of coaches	Page #
		Bunting	Hitting	Base running	Throwing	Receiving	Pitching					
CHAPTER 12												
137	Progression Blocking					X			I		1	195
138	Three-Ball Blocking					X			I		1	196
139	Play at the Plate					X			I, SG		2	197
140	Get Up and Go Bunting				X				A, I		1	198
141	Bunting Line Drill				X				I		0	199
142	Transition				X	X			I		1	200
143	Target on the Run				X	X			I, SG		0	201
144	Pop Flies are Easy					X			I		1	202
145	Wild-Pitch Outs				X				I, SG		0	203
146	Glove to Glove				X	X			Q, I, SG		1	204
147	Split-Field Throws				X	X			I, SG		2	205
148	Shuttle Touches								C, I, SG		0	206
CHAPTER 13												
149	Six Pitch		X						I		1	211
150	Major League		X						I, SG		1	212
151	Focused Batting Practice	X	X	X				X	I, SG, T		1	213
152	Point Game	X	X	X	X	X		X	SG, T		1	214
153	Consequences	X	X	X	X	X		X	SG, T		1	215
154	Short Game	X		X					SG, T		1	216
155	Runners in Motion	X	X	X					SG, T		1	217
156	Pressure Bunt	X		X					SG, T		1	218
157	Isolation Offense			X				X	SG		0	219
158	RBI		X	X					SG		0	220
159	Twenty-One	X	X	X				X	SG, T		2+	221

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Drill #	Drill	Offensive skills			Defensive skills		Communication	Fitness building	# of players	# of coaches	Page #
		Bunting	Hitting	Base running	Throwing	Receiving					
CHAPTER 13 (CONTINUED)											
160	Softball Yahtzee	X	X	X				X	SG, T	1	222
161	Short-Game Reads	X		X				X	SG, T	0	224
162	Hit and Run, Run, Run		X	X					SG, T	0	225
163	Ducks on the Pond	X	X	X				X	SG, T	1	226
164	First-and-Third Offensive Options			X				X	SG, T	1	228
CHAPTER 14											
165	21 in a Row				X	X		X	T	1	231
166	ABCs of First and Third				X	X		X	SG, T	1	232
167	Infield/Outfield Together Rounds				X	X		X	T	1	234
168	Two-Man Infield Fungo				X	X		X	SG, T	2	236
169	Pop-Up/Shallow Fly Ball				X	X		X	SG, T	2	237
170	Defending the Short Game				X	X		X	SG, T	0	238
171	Rundowns			X	X	X		X	SG, T	0	239
172	Outfield Shallow Relay or Cutoff			X	X	X		X	SG, T	1	240
173	Defensive Scouting Report				X	X		X	SG, T	1	242
174	Prime Time Defense			X	X	X		X	T	1	243
175	Deep Relays and Cutoffs			X	X	X		X	T	1	244
176	Four Points					X		X	SG, T	1	247
177	Right Side–Left Side Cross Fire					X			SG, T	2	248

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# Preface

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From beginning to advanced levels of play, all softball players and coaches need drills to practice the game. As coaches, the contributors of this book have spent the majority of their professional and playing careers training to be successful, and they have all found favorite drills that they wish to share with you. Young or old, rookie or veteran, every softball player can use the drills in these chapters to better her game. I encourage every reader to enter into a search for knowledge and insight with the pages that follow.

Each chapter was written by a successful Division I coach with great passion for the game and includes the drills that they use either in their programs on a daily basis, or during their camps, clinics, and preseason development sessions. I have also added to these chapters many of my favorite drills. The catching, throwing, bunting, team offense, and team defense chapters all include several drills that I have used during my time at UCLA, Oregon State, and with the USA National Team. In addition to the drills, each coach has written a short introduction explaining the importance of the chapter's area of focus. I encourage you to read these prior to looking at the drills in order to gain some insight into the philosophy and approach of that coach. Finally, there is a short biography of each contributor in the back of the book that describes where each coach gained his or her tremendous experience.

Each chapter of this book focuses on a specific skill or attribute needed to be successful at every level of softball. Part I includes chapters on warming up and conditioning. Part II covers the basics of catching, throwing, base running, hitting, bunting, and slapping, which are the fundamental skills and building blocks of softball. Part III includes position-specific drills for the infielder, outfielder, pitcher, and catcher. Finally, part IV includes team offense and team defense drills that will help the coach or team master these aspects of the game.

Each chapter includes 10 to 14 drills that will help athletes at all levels. Each drill should be read fully before execution in order to explore the intensity level. If the drill appears to be too easy or fundamental for your needed level, you may find that the variation section provides a way to alter the drill to fit your needs. Also be sure to read the coaching points section of each drill, as it is one of the greatest sources of information specific to the actual drill.

Drills are categorized in a number of different ways in the drill finder on pages vi to xiii to enable coaches and players to reference drills that cross over to other areas. For example, many drills throughout the book can be used for conditioning even though they are not found in the conditioning chapter. There

are also a number of drills across the chapters that focus on throwing or receiving, or even communication. I encourage you to fully explore the drill finder and take advantage of the crossover from chapter to chapter.







This book has been a labor of love about the sport of softball and the skills it takes to be successful. I have thoroughly enjoyed serving as the editor for this book. I hand selected each of the contributors not only because they are successful coaches, but mostly because they are tremendous people who have great passion for the sport and the athletes that play for them. In coordinating the chapters and overseeing the entire content, I have gained even more respect for these coaches. I know that in using this drill book you will discover that regardless of your level of play, you can have great passion for this sport while learning something new every day.

Enjoy your journey through this book and through your experience in softball. Always cherish the time you get to spend playing or coaching the greatest game ever invented. Always be willing to share your knowledge with others, just as the coaches and contributors in this book have committed to do. We are stewards of this sport, and none of us own the sport or the knowledge we gain. It is our job to help better our teammates, our coaches, and yes, even our competitors. If you can help your competitors be better, the level of our sport will grow to new heights, and our love for the game will be multiplied. Softball is a great game, but only a game. When the last out is made and the game is over, never forget that the joy of the game comes from playing and competing and not from winning the game alone.

—Kirk Walker, Editor

# ***Key to Diagrams***

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	Cone
	Player movement
	Throw
	Ground ball
	Hit
CO	Coach
X	Player
C	Catcher
P	Pitcher
1B	First baseman
2B	Second baseman
3B	Third baseman
SS	Shortstop
RF	Right fielder
CF	Centerfielder
LF	Left fielder
R	Runner
B	Batter
	Ball machine

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## **Introduction**

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# **Using Drills Effectively**

**Kirk Walker**   *Oregon State University Head Coach*

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In this book we'll take a look at how some of the most successful collegiate programs in the country use drills to practice the sport of fastpitch softball. A drill can be defined as the isolation of a physical or technical skill outside of the environment of an actual game. The key word here is *isolation* because it is often by separating or isolating a skill from its usual context that we can best teach our players the full value of the skill and how to improve in executing it. Yes, players might improve in, say, throwing ability by throwing a lot of balls in practice within the context of gamelike competition or casual games of catch with teammates. But if we want them to fully understand and appreciate the factors that determine whether a throw reaches its target at the precise angle, position, speed, and time that we desire, we need to isolate the skill, break it down into its parts, and then work on each of those parts before building the skill back up to whole again. This is where drills come in very handy.

The sport of fastpitch softball can be easily broken down into parts, the most obvious of which are offense and defense. Everything that we know about our sport falls into either an offensive or defensive category. If we look at these two areas of our game, we find a number of smaller components that can be isolated and thus more easily taught. On the offensive side, these include hitting, bunting, base running, slapping, and creating offensive strategies. On the defensive side, they include throwing, receiving, infield play, outfield play, pitching, catching, and defensive strategies.

Each of these components deserves its own chapter, which is exactly what we are pleased to provide in this book. Each chapter has been written by a coach at one of the best collegiate programs in the country. We have also included chapters on conditioning drills and drills that players and teams can use to warm up before games or practices. Each chapter contains detailed instructions for drills used to isolate skills that our players must master if they are to be fully effective during games. Drills range in focus from the most basic of



skills for beginning players to the most advanced skills for players in collegiate programs around the country.

## **The Value of Drills**

During my 22 years of coaching division I softball, one thing that has become overwhelmingly obvious is the value of using drills in practice. One value of drills is their ability to incorporate a high level of repetitions within a short amount of time. Coaches must use drills in practice to make the best use of their limited time with their players. Drills ensure that every essential component of the sport can receive its time in practice. Anything that can happen in a game can be drilled in a practice. Obviously, some skills, such as pitching and hitting, are essential in every inning of every game. Other skills, such as putting down a bunt, are used only a few times over the course of a game. Still other skills, such as the suicide squeeze, might come into play in only a few games all season. But no matter how rarely a skill is needed, we never know for sure when we're going to need it. This is why every player on every squad must be ready for every possible situation on every night. How can this happen? How can a coach balance practice time to cover all the possible situations and skills needed? Drills, drills, and more drills!

Good drills help coaches and players prepare for the season. Another value of good drills is that they can evolve and progress as the skill levels of your players progress. A final value for some drills comes when players are able to get feedback on proper mechanics. These types of drills are not just about repetition—they isolate and reinforce proper technique.

Drills that stand the test of time are those that can accomplish three objectives. First, the drill must give players an opportunity to practice a specific skill with repetition. Make sure the drills you choose give your players repetitions of skills they'll need in a game. Practicing any drill that doesn't have a specific purpose might help with conditioning but won't help a player get better at a specific skill. Always look for drills that focus on functional skill development.

Second, a good drill should give a player a clear and simple goal to accomplish. It should be easy for players to measure their success. Many players approach drill work as a waste of time as they want to actually hit or play a real game. If players are given clear goals for drills and understand how the drills will help them be better softball players, they'll be more focused and committed. Coaches should attempt to execute drills themselves before asking their players to attempt them. This can and should actually be done outside or away from practice to ensure that a drill is safe, appropriate, and beneficial in helping players learn the specific goal of the drill. Attempting these drills away from the players helps the coach fully understand and relate to the struggles or challenges that are created in a particular drill. Trial runs will also be helpful to coaches if they are going to demonstrate or show the drill to their players during practice.