

## Pinto Division List of Example Practice Drills

**Some Thoughts on Throwing the Ball:** When throwing the ball, get those front (glove) shoulders pointing straight at the target. Step toward the target when throwing the ball, and follow through. Get those arms bent at the elbow, up above the shoulder, when throwing the ball ("Down, Back & Up"). (Coaching Cue: Thumb to the Thigh, Knuckles to the Sky.) Elbow comes through first followed by hand and ball, fingers on top of the ball. Use the 4-seam grip. Follow through on your throws by bringing the Throwing Side Hip around on your follow through. In throwing, work on keeping the throwing elbow UP. Don't sling it, push it or side-arm it. Throwing "over the top" increases strength, velocity and accuracy. It also protects the arm from injury.

**Some Thoughts on Catching the Ball:** Always have your player move toward the ball and try to catch it in the center of the body with two hands. There are many players who still possess a real fear of the baseball. Going to the ball and becoming confident in their ability to catch the ball is the only way to overcome this fear. The obvious benefit of catching with 2 hands is the prevention of the ball popping out of the glove. Another important benefit of catching with 2 hands is the quick transition of the ball from the glove to the throwing hand. Another key element in playing catch is "Fingers Up, Fingers Down," depending on whether the ball is above or below the belly button. Discourage "slapping" at the low ball with the fingers up. Throw them line drives, ground balls, pop ups, short hops, etc. Have them get low on ground balls. Get that head down. Look for the button on top of their hats as they field grounders. (You should be able to see it when they are doing it properly.)

### Drills (alphabetical):

#### Alligator Pairs:

- Two lines 10 ft apart facing each others with gloves
- Roll ball to each other, two hand alligator jaws , 10 + reps each
- Focus on fielding in front from ready position—think “hands under cap”
- Glove is down, throwing fingers “to the sky”—Alligator BITES to catch!
- Field the ball, then roll it back to partner
- Watch ready position; keep butts down and hands out.

#### Base running Relay Contest:

- Half of the team at home plate, half at second base
- Run around touching each base and tag next player on your team to start their leg of the relay
- Focus is rounding bases properly touching inside corners to push off

#### Base running through, not to first:

- To teach running through the base set two cones 5 ft past the base and have the players run through the cones and turn to the right after

**Bucket Drill:** This is a fun, productive drill, especially for younger kids, though older kids can gain benefit from it too. It focuses on the importance of getting rid of the ball in a hurry and helps in making accurate throws.

How it works: Split your team in half. Line the first team up, one behind another, at the shortstop position. Take the second team and place them behind first base. Next, place a five gallon bucket or garbage can upside down on first base. Make sure that you have plenty of baseballs handy. Depending on the age level, the coach rolls or hits a ball to the first person in line at the shortstop position, who then has three seconds to pick up the ball and throw it at the bucket. The coach should loudly count off the seconds; this will initially fluster some of your younger players, but will also help them to cope with pressure better in the long run. If the bucket is missed, the player behind first base fields the ball and returns it to the coach. Regardless of the outcome, the player who made the throw rotates to the back of the line. After several passes through the line, switch sides.

As an added bonus, keep score between the two teams. You can give a point if the throw is in time and a point if they hit the bucket. It is amazing how much more effort you can get out of a kid if he's competing against his friends. If you have enough coaching help, you can vary this drill by having both teams throw at the same time; the competition is a big hit with players.

**Bucket of Balls:** All infield positions are used except for the pitcher. This drill requires a minimum of 5 players but can accommodate more. Start with a player at each position and the drill proceeds much like a standard infield. Empty the balls near home plate and count them before the drill starts or keep track of errors. Place the bucket in foul territory next to 3rd base. Start the drill by hitting a ground ball to the 3rd baseman and have him throw to 1st. 1st baseman will then throw to the catcher who will throw it to 3rd and the 3rd baseman will put the ball in the bucket. Next ground ball to the SS with the throw to 1st and then to the catcher who this time will throw it down to 2nd and then over to 3rd and in the bucket. Keep track of any errors that occur or don't

place the ball in the bucket. The goal is to make it through the drill without any errors. If you have two players at each position you can have two teams and compete between the teams.

**Bucket Line Drill:** This is a great way to get a lot of fielding reps for players. Set up a cone about 40 feet away from a bucket full of balls (you can adjust based on the size of the players). Have the players line up single file behind the cone. Have a coach set up about midway between the cone and the bucket and off to the side (maybe about 5 feet or so). The coach at the bucket will begin rolling balls and the players will charge and field the ball then run around the coach who is off to the side and finally drop the ball in the bucket. They will then sprint to the back of the player line at the cone and be ready to do it again.

**Chair Drill:** To teach a batter how to swing level or slightly down on the ball. Equipment: Bat, Tee, Balls, Chair (metal folding chair works great). This drill will force a player to keep the bat level when swinging by making the batter swing over the back of a chair before hitting the ball off of the tee. Set up a tee and place a chair behind the tee so that the seat of the chair is facing the tee. Adjust the tee so that the ball will be sitting level or slightly lower than the back of the chair. Have the batter take up a hitting position and then hit the ball off the tee. The hitter receives instant feedback if their swing comes in as an uppercut. You might even start out practicing a slow swing at first and then gradually picking up speed if the batter is having trouble. Key Phrase: Keep the hands above the ball.

**Follow the Ball:** Place 1 player at each infield position except pitcher. All other players are in a line at SS ready to receive a ground ball. Coach hits a ground ball to the SS who throw to 1B, who throws to 2B, who throws to 3B who throws home. After each throw the player goes to the base they just threw to for the next round, and the catcher goes to the back of the line at SS (thus follow the ball). In all cases the focus is on good throws, proper catching technique and tagging. 1B should be focused on a proper step and catch, 2B, 3B and Catcher should receive the ball in the correct manner so they can place the tag quickly.

#### **Fly Balls:**

- Teach glove “fingers up” above the waist and “fingers down” below the waist
- Move feet first to get under the ball, catch above the bill of your hat over glove eye.

#### **Goalie Drill:**

- Three sets of two cones set 10 ft apart set on infield (Backhand, Forehand, Straight ahead)
- Purpose of drill is to build fielding footwork and range of coverage by stopping ball from going through the goal
- One player positioned 1 ft in front of cones, centered—ready position--coach rolls ball
- Player does not have to field it, just bat it away—roll 5 balls then next player

#### **Hitting contest:**

- Set a 1-point, 2-point and 3-point cone in the infield / outfield
- Each player gets 3 swings to see how many points they get

#### **Infield Practice:**

- Line up players at positions. Practice ready position, alligator hands; throw lightning bolts to first base.

**Perfect Innings:** Two teams compete against each other: one on defense, one running the bases. Coach hits the ball wherever he wants. A team must make nine consecutive outs. Any mistake pulls the team off the field and the other team goes on defense. Try to simulate all routine situations that come up in a game.

**Relay Drill:** Divide your kids into teams of 4-5 kids to a team. Each team should create a straight line with the players positioned approximately 50 feet apart. The object of each team is to throw to the next player in their line until the ball goes all the way down to the end of the line and back. The thrower should be using the next fielders’ chest as his target. Accuracy is paramount. High, wide or bounced throws make for poor relays. Also look for players turning to their glove side when throwing the ball to the next player on the line. (Right hand throwers spin to their left, Left hand throwers spin to their right.) Have fun by having the teams race each other. Players will learn very early that dropped or wild throws will cause them to lose the race.

**Star Game:** Place 1 player at each infield position except pitcher. 2-3 players are in a line at SS ready to receive a ground ball, and 2-3 players have their helmets on at home ready to be a runner. The coach hits the ball to SS (runner begins running the bases). SS throws to 1B, 1B to 3B, 3B to 2B, and 2B to home. The goal is to make good throws and catches to beat the runner home. Rotate players so that each person gets to field, catch, throw and run during the drill/game. This works on good throwing and catching techniques, while also working on proper base running. It is a great sort of game as the goal is to beat the runner home...infielders are then working hard to not make errors, while the base runners are working extra hard to make good turns and hit the inside of the base every time. This drill can be modified for any team by changing where the base runner starts from.

**Tee Hitting Drill:** Have your players try hitting off the tee placed in different positions around the plate. To practice hitting the ball out in front of the plate, place the tee at least 12 to 36 inches in front of the plate. Place the tee towards the inside or outside corners of the plate to work on hitting the ball where it is pitched. When placing the tee on the inside corner, remember to place it in front of the plate to encourage making early, out in front contact. When placing the tee on the outside corner, remember to place it towards the back of the plate to encourage hitting the ball deeper in the zone. You may also want to place the tee higher or on top of a bucket to encourage staying on top of the ball. When hitting off of a tee, make sure you have players focusing on specific aspects of hitting mechanics (weight shift, hitting out in front, a level swing, coordinating the timing between the lower and top-half of the body, etc).

**Water Bottle Drill:** Two teams (one team at SS other at 2B), place large, empty plastic water bottle on top of a ball bucket at home plate and hit ground balls to the teams, alternating, each player has to field the ball and throw to home plate trying to knock off the water bottle. They get points each time it hits the bottle. First team to 10 wins. Note, if the ball is not fielded cleanly, they have to make the throw from where it stops, making it a tougher throw.

**Web Gems drill:**

- Lineup in any infield position in single line (or multiple positions 2-3 kids deep)
- Hit standard ground ball, player must field or go to back of line
- For 2<sup>nd</sup> ground ball, have player point to where he wants it hit (left, right, straight)
- Player must make forehand catch with spinning throw to first, or backhand dive, or barehand a slow roller and throw to first for a Web Gem play. Can also use as a contest and have team vote on best Web Gem.
- Can use with fly balls/liners also.