

## TierraCanyon Softball Clinic Run by Mary Jo Griswold

### Bat Size:

- Correct length – put the head of the bat on the ground and the bat handle should fit in the inside crease of the girl's wrist
- Correct weight – The difference between the weight and the length should be (-10 to -12). Example: 27" / 17 oz, 30" / 19oz. Use a bat that's light enough for the player to *easily control and that the bat head does not drop down during the swing.*
- Check: Have the girl hold the bat straight out parallel to the ground, arm extended. If the bat droops towards the ground, the bat is too heavy for her.

### Glove Size:

- Use a 12" glove at least. Put baby and ring finger in the last hole for more squeezing power.

### Helpful Equipment to Have for Practices:

- Buckets for drills (can get from home depot)
- Softball sized whiffle balls (helpful for ground ball or fly ball drills, especially for girls who are afraid of the ball)
- Nerf football for two-handed fly catching drills (girls are never scared of nerf footballs)

### Starting off practices...

#### Indian Run

Have girls line up 5 deep, with each line facing different directions from each other. Give them a stopping / turnaround point. Then send them off running to that point and back. After they start running, the girl at the front of the line should yell "GO", and the girl at the end of the line needs to sprint to the front of the line, jog a bit, and then yell "GO" so that the next girl at the end of the line runs to the front and so on. This goes on until the girls run to the end point and back. Note: It is important to group girls with like speed together so that the girl at the end of the line has the ability to sprint ahead to the front. If the girls are not evenly matched, the girl at the rear may never be able to catch up to the front.

#### Name Game while Stretching

Do this at the first 1-2 practices. It is important that each girl know all the other girls by name, as well as the coaches learn all of the girls' names. Have each girl say the name of an animal whose name starts with the same first letter as the girl's name (e.g., Kelly the Kangaroo). Have each girl say their name and animal name in a circle. Then ask "Who can name all the names?" You'll be surprised that several of the girls can name everyone right away. Repeat this game until everyone knows everyone else's name.

## **Teach Positions**

Make sure everyone knows the field layout (e.g., left field is based on the perspective of standing on home plate), and that they know where each position is supposed to be.

## **Warm Up Drills...**

### **High Knees / Butt Kicks**

Have the girls stand on the Left Base Line (tests their knowledge of where this is too) with their toes on the line. Have them walk briskly to the second base line with their knees raised up high (at least to hip level) on each step. On the return trip, have them walk briskly kicking up their rear leg so that it touches their butt.

### **Frankenstein / Karoke**

From left baseline, have the girls go slowly with each step kicking up their front leg straight out to hip level, touching their foot to the opposite extended hand. On the return trip, work on footwork by having each girl do the grapevine step back as fast, but as accurately as they can. Make sure the girls know what the grapevine step is before they start, and make sure they do the right foot work vs. shuffling feet side to side.

## **Rocker Position**

1. Stand with non-glove foot on the bag and glove foot extending over the bag.
2. Square off to infield ("Check Off") = stand with feet straddling the bag so that you are ready to move either direction depending upon where the throw is.
3. "Back" – Cross-over, always looking at pitcher and not at the bag.
4. "Go" – to next base
5. "Dive Back" – cross-over and land on tops of thighs/quads (do this on grass only – girls typically like diving on the grass; don't force girls to dive on the dirt during the game, but let those who want to do it).
6. Teach girls how to get up quickly after Dive Back (such as will be needed when there is an overthrow at their base). There is no particular method to do this, just whatever works quickest for the individual girl.
7. Make sure each girl is listening to coach's command and gets up quickly.

Note: Coaches need to teach girls to listen to them.

Drill girls by having them lie down in figure four position (on their backs) and then say "GO" (to get up); also do front down and "GO".

Note: Sprints are fun and girls like them.

Girls are now warmed up.

Note: If a girl shows up late to practice, then have her run solo to warm up. Don't add her mid-drill. And have parent warm up her arm.

Note: For all drills, especially the slower, more deliberate positioning ones, emphasize to girls that while they should take their time in practice and drills to make sure their positioning is correct, during the game they need to play the game at game speed, not at drill speed.

Note: For any play you see going wrong in a game be sure to practice that play at the next practice.

## Hitting...

Note: – Never teach hitting and fielding on the same practice day. Focus on one only.  
– Make sure each bat that a girl is holding is touching the ground while the coach is talking

### Hitting Position Drill

Take 5-6 girls at a time (or as many as have properly fitted bats). Stagger all girls so that they are facing the coach (standing near home plate but acting as pitcher). Draw a line in the dirt in front of the batters' feet. Have each girl position her toes on that line, facing the pitcher (i.e., coach).

## 4 Stage Sequence:

### Position 1:

#### Stance:

- **Balance:** Toes on the line, feet shoulder width apart, weight on the balls of the feet (need to show girls what this means, i.e., weight on the portion of the foot from the front of the shoe to the shoe laces), but still have heels be touching the ground. Quads need to be engaged by "sitting on a bar stool", but don't have knees bent deeply, just slight bend enough to engage quads. Balance = power. Coaches Check: Push on the side of the girl's upper arm to test her balance. If standing properly, she will not easily be pushed off balance.
- **Grip:** Bat NOT in palm. Grip with bottom hand first with bent wrist. Hands relaxed. Door knocking knuckles lined up.
- **Bat Position:** Place bat on shoulder and pick up hands, knob facing straight out by ear. Should form an upside down "V" with elbows (elbows are down).

### Position 2: Trigger

#### Stride:

- Take short stride, sliding step towards the pitcher – **foot even like in starting point, no weight transfer**, land inside big toe. Sit to re-balance. Glue down front foot Coaches Check: Hands don't move on 2 – go back and re-check hands and that weight has not transferred.

### Position 3:

#### Hip – Knee – Foot Rotation:

- Rotate hips: Hip / Knee to the ball (Only position that changes depending on the pitch). Weight transfer starts.
- Back foot starts to turn.

Note: Forget “squash the bug” – girls are becoming too focused on turning the back foot and getting off balance.

Parents / Coaches Check: Make sure no hands moving at this stage. Must have hips move *before* hands move. Have parents hold the girl’s bat so it does not move.

### Position 4:

#### Hands:

- ***Hands must go inside the ball.***
- Bottom hand leads – elbow then hand.
- Top hand – elbow then hand, with top hand in “shaking hands” position.
- Desire = big toe still on the power line.

#### Bunting:

- Foot position – slight open pivot with both feet – Front of the box
- Bottom hand is the driver
- Thumbs up position with top hand to fat part of the bat
- Bat angle – Take the “driver” to the ball
- Players head & eyes must go to the bat head, as if head is attached on a string to the bat

Note: Do this drill station first, then hit off tee, then soft toss pitch, then front toss, then from pitcher – else all form is lost. ***Do not move a girl up to the next level until she masters the prior level.*** Hitting 10 times off the tee without hitting the tee is success (hard to do).

### Hitting Drills:

#### Sequence Hitting

1. Ready Position
2. Timing Trigger / Step
3. Hip Turn
4. Hands

#### Tee

Place Tee in front of plate – don’t put tee on the plate. If girls hit the tee, it is because they’ve dropped their hands. If they do this, then do a one-handed drill without the bat, using the lower hand, then the one-handed drill with a light bat or dowel stick. Have girls queue up at this station, take 3 swings off of tee, and then move to the end of the queue, even if all 3 swings are a miss. Keeps the drill moving quickly.

#### Soft Toss (use whiffle ball)

Toss ball at an angle towards the batter’s front hip (Note: teach parent helper how to aim for the front hip).

1. Up – hold ball up for batter, Batter takes Stance (Position 1)

2. Drop Arm – Batter takes Stride (Position 2)
3. Once the ball comes up and the batter can see the ball – Batter moves hips, knee and start of foot rotation (Position 3)
4. As the ball reaches the top and drops – Batter follows through with hands on swing (Position 4)

### **Front Toss**

Coach stands close into batter (not on rubber). Pitch must be a flat pitch, not an arching pitch.

1. Coach holds up the ball – Batter takes Stance (Position 1)
2. Coach's hand separates – Batter takes Stride (Position 2)
3. Ball is released and the Batter tracks - Batter moves hips, knee and start of foot rotation (Position 3)
4. Once the ball reaches point of contact near the plate – Batter follows through with hands on swing (Position 4)

Note: As soon as batter is out of balance to reach a ball, then the pitch is a ball and they should be taught not to swing at it. It is not a matter of “good eye”.

### **Pitching Machine**

Coach needs to hold up a second ball that the player can see and time off of. The coach uses her right hand to pitch the windmill motion and once the arm circles and is at her hip (at the machine), she puts the 2<sup>nd</sup> ball in with her left hand. Batter needs a visual cue that the pitch is coming. Don't just drop the ball into the machine – with no visual cue for timing, batter's swing will fall apart.

### **Other Drills (not covered in clinic)**

- Call out Color Soft Toss
- Tennis ball drill

### **Throwing...**

Note: Always start with 1-Knee Drill.

Tip: Put black electrical tape around the equator of the ball (through the “C” seam) to check for proper rotation on throw – **6-12 o'clock spin.**

#### **1. Grip:**

- Three fingers across top of left facing “C” on seams. Thumb underneath, below middle finger, (not on side). Lead with elbow on throw and snap wrist on release.

#### **2. Throwing Sequence:**

- **Cradle** – Stand in Receive position with two hands
- **Scarecrow** – Circle ball arm back , with thumb passing by thigh, and point glove hand towards target. Arms should be straight and outstretched in opposite directions.



- 3B throws to second base (2B).
- 2B throws to H.
- At each position have 2 girls lined up. If a girl misses the catch then she switches positions with the girl behind her.
- Count each time the ball makes it through a complete cycle back to home without being dropped.
- Do this several times through, then rotate the positions clockwise (e.g., Home -> 3B, 3B -> SS, etc.)
- Alternate: add a base runner and see if they get thrown out.

## Fielding...

Note: - Use a 12" glove at least.

- **Put baby and ring finger in the last hole for more squeezing power.**
- Store the glove with an 11" RIF softball in the pocket and a rubber band or belt around the entire glove to help form a good pocket in the glove – aids in catching.

### 1. Ready Position:

- Line up girls with toes on the line, feet shoulder width apart, weight on the balls of feet, and sit as if in a chair, elbows in with arms along the waist, and weight on glove foot.

### 2. Ground Balls:

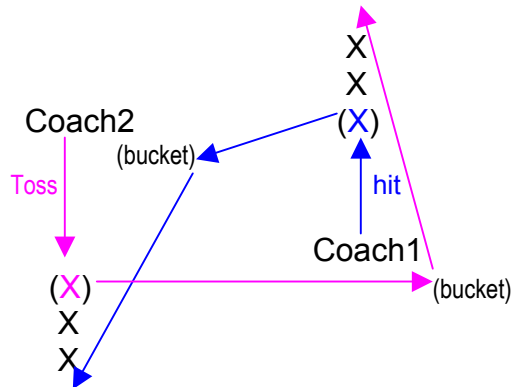
- Field the ball out front, head down (Coach should see top of head / ponytail).
- Glove foot must go (forward) to the ball. Coach calls out "Ready – 1 2 3 «Glove Foot»" and girls should in response step low three times forward, **fielding the ball inside the glove foot that is slightly ahead.**
- Collect the ball into the belly button to cradle position to throw.

Note: Remind girls to attack the ball on a chopper – don't wait for the ball to come to you, charge it.

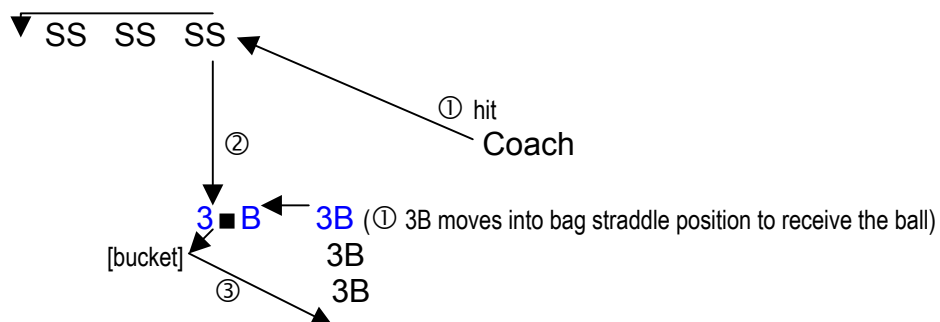
### 3. Ground Ball Drills:

- **Gloveless Whiffle Ball**
- **# Ball** – Call out the number
- **Line Shuffle**
  - Form 2 lines of 5. Coach throws grounder to front of line who fields it, throws it back to the coach and then goes back to the end of the line.
- **Chicken**
- **Knee Down** – ground ball right at them in the outfield
  - If no one is on base, then on a ground ball hit to the outfielder, glove foot goes to the ball and the opposite knee goes down and the glove foot turns in slightly as the glove goes down to the ground next to glove foot.

- **Double Fungo with buckets (no throwing)**
  - Need 10 – 12 girls and two coaches to do this drill. Be sure to take a break when girls get tired.
  - Form two lines of girls opposite and about 15 feet apart. Coach1 hits a ground ball to the head of Line1, who fields it and runs over (laterally) and drops it into the bucket of Coach2 and then proceeds to the end of the line of Line2 (opposite Coach2).
  - *At the same time*, Coach2 throws a ground ball to the start of Line2, who fields it and runs over (laterally) and drops it into the bucket of Coach1 and then proceeds to the end of the line of Line1 (opposite Coach1).



- **Bucket Drills**
  - 2-3 players and a bucket at each position
  - Coach hits a grounder to SS who throws to 3B, who puts ball into the bucket and runs to the back of the 3B line; SS also runs to the end of the SS line.
  - At the same time, second coach hits a grounder to 2B who throws to 1B, who puts the ball into the bucket and runs to the back of the 1B line; 2B also runs to the end of the 2B line.
  - Always have player turn in to face the infield and non-glove foot goes to bag. Be sure to look for the ball before you cover the base.
  - When waiting for the throw, be sure to straddle the bag to give you maximum coverage for an errant throw, then take glove foot to the ball.
  - Example:



- Alternates to this drill are 1B -> 3B and 3B -> 2B.

#### 4. Short Hops (important for first baseman)

- No foot work; in “sit” position close to coach who tosses a short hop to player.
- Drop down to get the ball, then up.

Coach Check: *Do not pop up first then go down – always go down to the ball first.*

#### 5. Back Hand

#### 6. Fly Balls:

- Two hands make a “W” above forehead, fingers pointing to the sky.
- After the fly ball is hit, keep fingers (mitt) to the sky or to the ground. Move feet if needed to preserve fingers up or down position. *Never have fingers sideways.*

##### 1) Football Toss

- User Nerf football to practice catching with two hands. Keep glove on.
- Forces player to use both hands to make the catch.

##### 2) Whiffle Fly

- Toss high fly ball in front of player and have player catch on throwing side.

##### 3) Add Movement

- When fly ball first thrown, take a drop step back on the side the ball is on to assess ball’s depth and position. Then run (not back-peddle) back looking over shoulder for the ball (feet are pointed the other way, same direction as run back). Then stop and square up to the ball in the “W” position ready to make the catch. Exercise helps to work on footwork.
- If player is experienced at catching fly balls, then coach can hold the ball out in one direction while girl runs that same direction, then switch to opposite side, girl then switches to that direction, etc. Player should not stop running back until the ball is thrown. If player is not experienced at catching fly balls, just make her move in one direction only.

Coach Check: Whatever you do, get rid of back-peddle.

- Cuts:

- Ball to Left Fielder, then throw is to SS as cut
- Ball to Center Fielder, then throw is to SS as cut
- Ball to Right Fielder, then throw is to 2B as cut
- **Outfielders never throw to Pitcher – always throw to cut off**
- Have infielder call for the cut “Cut, cut, cut”
- Cut should catch the ball square on, then **always turn glove side to throw**

#### 7. Drills: (Use tennis ball or whiffle ball for confidence)

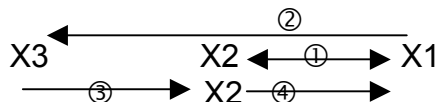
- **Cut Relay**

- Contest to see which relay team can relay the ball into home plate first. Requires 2 catchers. Can also queue up this drill with two players at each fielding position.

- Place a ball on the ground 30' beyond each outfielder (left & right).
- On the signal, each outfielder runs back, picks up the ball and throws it to the cut who then turns and throws it to the catcher:  
 LF -> SS -> C1  
 RF -> 2B -> C2

- **3 Line Drill**

- Line up 3 players:



- X1 throws a grounder to X2 who throws it back.
- X1 then throws a fly ball to X3 who then will throw it to X2, their CUT. X2 faces X3 square on and yells "cut, cut, cut". X3 throws the ball to X2, who turns glove side and throws it back to X1.
- Rotate the girls forward to experience all three locations.

- **Circle Fly Ball** – call out number

- **Blind Drill**

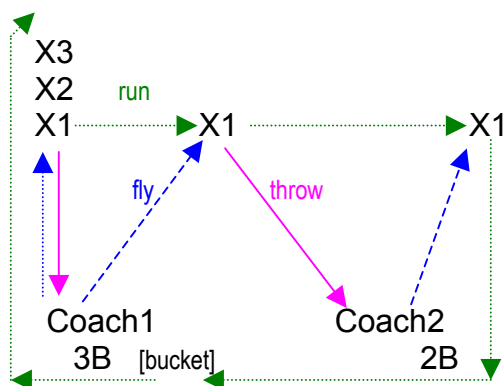
- **Charge Drop**

- Coach throws ground ball to Player.
- Player fields it and throws it back to Coach.
- Coach then throws a fly ball over Players head, while player drop steps, then runs back (no backpeddling) to make the catch.

- **Load and Go** – quick out at a base

- **Weave**

- Form a line of girls on left base line in outfield.
- Coach1 on third base throws a ground ball to first player in left field. Player then throws it back to Coach1.
- Coach1 then throws a fly ball towards center field, the player runs on a deep angle to CF to make the catch. This time, the player throws the ball to Coach2 who is standing at second base.
- Coach2 then throws a fly ball to Right Field the player again runs over to make the catch.
- The Player then runs with the ball towards the infield and puts the ball in the bucket at 3<sup>rd</sup> base next to Coach 1, and returns to the line in left field.



- **Bucket Drills**

- **Gap** (do with both fly balls and grounders)
  - Two lines of fielders spaced gap width apart.
  - Fly ball (or ground ball) is hit between them.
  - Player closest to the ball should call for it (“Mine, mine”) and proceeds to make the catch while the other fielder runs behind into the back up position.
  - The player who makes the catch throws it into the Cut infielder and both fielders rotate to the end of the opposite line.

Note: The fielder calling “mine” needs to do so early enough so that the back-up fielder has enough time to get into the back up position.

  - On a grounder, the back up fielder comes in closer to the primary fielder.
  - On a fly, back up fielder should be further back.
  - If both the primary and back up fielder miss the ball, then it becomes a double cut situation and the first baseman comes over to be the second cut. **The cut needs to run towards ball until it stops. This will stop the home run.**

## Pitching ...

If too many wild pitches in a game then do this drill:

1. Pitcher mock throws the pitch. Coach rolls the ball to the side of the catcher.
2. Catcher turns back to get the ball, taking the glove foot to ball, ending up sideways, with non-glove foot just past the ball. Don't go square up to the passed ball (even in the outfield, don't go square up to a ball that has passed you, but always take the glove foot to the ball ending up sideways. This sets you up to be able to turn quicker to make the throw back).
3. While catcher is getting the ball, **pitcher charges the plate and jump stops squared up in front** of the plate (not on the plate) and waits for the ball from the catcher.
4. Catcher throws the ball from a low position – note: catcher's hand should not come above her knee.

Pitcher squares in front of the plate, catches the ball and turns into the plate.

## Base Running...

Every girl can base run.

1. Home to 1<sup>st</sup> Base. Running through 1<sup>st</sup> base:
  - Hit front part of the bag (closest to home).
  - Run past the bag and breakdown, feet about shoulder width apart, squared towards second base, low and balanced on both feet, ready to go if base coach gives the call.
  - Put cone and parent past 1<sup>st</sup> base for the runner to aim for in drill as the spot past the bag to run to and breakdown.

Note: If runner turns out, she has no shot at 2<sup>nd</sup> base. Runner must listen to the coach either “stop” or “go 2”.

2. Home to 2<sup>nd</sup> base. Rounding the base:
  - Run in semi-circle and hit inside part of the bag – do not break stride. Go in a straight line to next base.
3. Leading off:
  - Right foot on side facing next base. Left foot behind the base
  - Rock back – push off on right foot with pitch.
  - Step with left foot. Watch pitcher’s hip for the ball.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> base = 3 steps, square up to home.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> base = larger lead.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> base = lead off in foul territory. Face pitcher.

### **Base Running Drills:**

- **Team lead-off with pitcher** (continuous)
- **Relay Race** – Half the team at home plate and half the team at 2<sup>nd</sup> base. Divide teams evenly by speed.
- **Over-Under** – Tee ball game
  - Place infielders (1B, 2B, SS, 3B).
  - Have hitter hit off tee at home.
  - Fielder who gets the ball runs to pitcher’s location and the other 3 fielders line up behind her. She then passes the ball over her head to the next fielder in line, who passes the ball under her legs to the next in line, etc. The race is for the fielders field the ball, race to the pitcher’s spot and pass the ball over-under-over before the hitter can complete her home run.
  - If hitter wins, she gets to stay at bat and hit again (right away, no break) up until 3 hits. Else, hitter rotates to 3B, fielders shift clockwise and 1B becomes the next hitter.
- **Indian Relay** (see first page)
- **Chase** – start one runner at 1<sup>st</sup> base, give second runner a head start from first base. On signal, both runners continue around the bases.
- **Tag Up Fly Ball** – 3<sup>rd</sup> base