



# Twenty-One

## **Objective**

To improve throwing accuracy

## **Setup**

Two players and a baseball

## **Execution**

This is a game played by baseball players at all levels. As players play catch, 1 point is awarded to the thrower for each ball caught at chest level. Two points are awarded for a ball caught at head level. Points can be deducted for uncatchable throws. If a throw is accurate but the receiver misses it, points are still awarded to the thrower. The first player to 21 wins. Stress proper mechanics. Set up a team competition in which winners move on and losers are eliminated. To speed things up, play to 15 instead of 21.



# Long-Toss Golf

## Objective

To work on proper long-tossing technique, building arm strength, and throwing accuracy

## Setup

Cones (or some other target), balls, paint, or tape

## Execution

Place a cone or some other target in the outfield, far enough away to challenge the players' arm strength. Draw, paint, or tape a circle around the target, representing a golf green. Each player tosses a ball toward the target. Points are awarded for landing on the green or hitting the pin. The player coming closest to the pin each round can be awarded bonus points. You can use the same target over and over, make new targets, or set up a course. Limit this drill to between 25 and 50 tosses per player. Perform once per week for younger players.

## Make It Fun

Set up a long-toss golf course of 9 or 18 holes at your facility. Place players in foursomes and see who records the best individual and team scores.



## Coaching Keys

This is a long-toss drill designed to build arm strength, so players should work on throwing the ball with an arc and getting the ball to carry. Young players might tend to throw the ball really high, almost like a pop-up, which won't help their throwing mechanics. All players should use proper throwing mechanics. The player's shoulders should remain almost on the same plane throughout the throwing motion. If the back shoulder is dropping too much, demonstrate the proper technique. Remind players that an accurate one- or two-hop throw is better than a longer throw that's off target.



# Shoot and Score!

## Objective

To improve throwing accuracy

## Setup

Two goals, a bucket of balls, target (optional)

## Execution

After players warm up their arms, set up two goals across from each other at a distance at which they can throw the ball into the goals in the air and on a line. One player stands to the side of each goal. Players take turns trying to throw the ball into the other's goal. Award 1 point for each ball that rolls into the goal and 2 points for a ball that enters the goal in the air. Another variation is to hang, tape, or paint a target onto the goal. Then 1 point is awarded for scoring a goal and 2 points for hitting the target. Targets also can be hung on fences, soccer goals, or walls. Hold a team competition to see who throws most accurately.

## Make It Fun

Divide the team in half and have each side compete for the best team scores. An individual champion can be crowned as well.



## Coaching Keys

Players who miss the target usually aren't stepping toward the target or aren't pointing the front shoulder toward the target.



## Throw for Distance

### Objective

To learn how using the body's momentum can help you throw the ball farther

### Setup

Football field (or other marked field); a bucket of balls; cones, stakes, or other markers (optional)

### Execution

If you practice near a football field, have players line up at the goal line one at a time. Stress proper mechanics and have each player throw a ball (or several balls) to see who can set the "world record." After a few rounds, have players shuffle their feet and follow their throws so they can see the results of generating momentum toward their target. You can disqualify players who don't use proper mechanics. Celebrate world records as well as throws made using proper mechanics. This drill is a fun way to build arm strength through long tossing and to emphasize the importance of mechanics and footwork. This drill should be done only once a week. Have younger players line up on a line (foul line or goal line) and throw at the same time. They can then run to their ball, see whose ball went farthest, pick it up, and run back.

### Make It Fun

Chart all throws each week, not just the "world records," and allow the players to see how their arms get stronger over time. Also chart the differences between balls thrown flat-footed and balls thrown after shuffling the feet.



### Coaching Keys

This is a long-toss drill that's also used to help players learn to use their bodies to throw the ball farther. Remember that the shoulders should remain on almost the same plane throughout the throwing motion and that players should not throw pop-ups. Try to limit the number of shuffles a player takes to simulate how quickly they should get rid of the ball in a game situation. Usually, no more than two shuffle-steps should be taken.



## One-Knee Drill

### Objective

To introduce players to proper throwing mechanics, particularly arm action (getting the ball down, out, and up)

### Setup

Two players (or a player and a coach) and a baseball

### Execution

This drill breaks down the player's arm action and works on keeping the elbow at the proper level. Players drop their throwing-side knee to the ground with the opposite knee up and play catch at a short distance using a four-seam grip to throw. Concentrate on taking the ball down, out, and up from the glove and keeping the elbow above the shoulder. The hand is on top of the ball as it's taken out of the glove, shifting to behind the ball as the arm comes forward. Players don't throw hard. Have them check their grip, hand, and elbow position after bringing the ball down out and up. Hand should be on top of the ball with fingers pointing away from the target just before the arm comes forward. From there, the player points the front shoulder toward the target, rotates the hips, brings the arm forward, and releases the ball, keeping the elbow above the shoulder. Younger players can use soft baseballs or do this drill with their coaches.



(continued)



## **One-Knee Drill (continued)**



### **Coaching Keys**

Many young players turn their hand so that it's under the ball before they bring the arm forward. Some people call this "pie throwing." Think of how you have to hold a pie to throw it at someone; the palm is facing up so that you don't drop the pie. This is the opposite of how you should throw a baseball. For players who do this, have them stop their motion just before they bring the arm forward and check to see that the hand is on top of the ball and that the ball is pointing straight back. Other players will let their elbows drop below shoulder level at the release point. To fix this problem, try the Tee Drill (next).

## Throwing

### KEY POINTS

1. Use a four-seam grip whenever throwing to a teammate on defense.
2. Grip the ball lightly in the fingers, not in the palm, as if holding an egg.
3. Grip the ball with two fingers, laying the index and middle fingers next to the “horseshoe” and across the seams.
4. Younger players with smaller hands can use three fingers.
5. Space the index and middle fingers slightly apart to minimize “drag” on the ball.
6. Place the thumb under the ball; the thumb should not “creep” up alongside the ball.
7. Removed the ball from the glove and take it down, out, and up to a position pointing away from the target. (This is a small circular motion.)
8. Shift weight to back foot as arm goes back away from target.
9. Keep hand (fingers) on top of the ball, shifting behind the ball as the arm comes forward.
10. Keep elbow above the shoulder, forming an “L” as the ball is released.
11. Point the front shoulder at the target.
12. Step toward the target, transferring weight to front foot.
13. Release ball as arm comes forward.
14. Continue moving toward target after ball is released.