



United Kingdom Youth Baseball Association

Baseball Coaching Excellence Course

Module 1

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to Baseball
and Coaching

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Young People

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for Baseball

This is **Module 2** of the UKYBA Baseball Coaching Excellence Course.

This Module has 3 Sections. Please complete the EXAM at the end of each section and email it to:

Tony@YouthBaseballAssociationUK.co.uk



United Kingdom Youth Baseball Association

Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

Section 1

Baseball Training Focus

The coach has to assess the unique needs of the sport and allocate time to improving each quality within the athlete. Athletic abilities and fitness assessments should be made for each athlete to match the athlete's needs to the sport based on the level of competition. Then the athlete has a clear roadmap of where they are and where they wish to go based on their motivation, ability and goals.



All sports differ in terms of the relative importance various physical skills contribute to the game and to individual athlete's performance. The movements in baseball are ballistic in nature and involve full-body activity. The ability to repeatedly perform near maximal level with limited rest bouts is necessary for baseball players.



Baseball players *should not* be trained to build excess bulk or muscle mass. They *should focus* on improving quick, reactive movements, increasing explosiveness and injury prevention, as well as improving speed and trunk rotation. This will lead to improved bat speed and ball velocity.

➤ Energy Systems

Because of the *anaerobic* nature of the game, baseball players use the *phosphagen system* as the primary source of energy, and is the quickest, most powerful source of energy for muscle movement. The phosphagen system is a form of anaerobic metabolism that uses creatine phosphate to generate ATP (adenosine triphosphate, the chemical which provides energy for all body processes). Unfortunately, it will support activity for only about 10 seconds. Although the phosphagen system produces only a little ATP, it generates energy very quickly. This provides the maximal power needed for short bursts of activity, such as when a sprinter explodes out of the blocks, or when a baseball player needs to accelerate after a ground ball or swing a bat.



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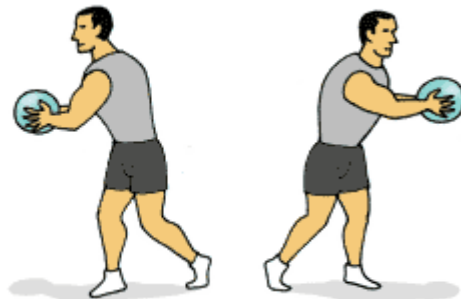
Section 1

Baseball Training Focus

➤ Rotational Movements

One of the key differences in baseball is that the main activities of hitting and throwing occur in a ***rotational plane of movement and are very ballistic or explosive in nature.*** Therefore, baseball players need to train rotationally with light weights and high speed. Exercise that emphasizes rotating the hips and torso using resistance from cables/pulleys, dumbbells and medicine balls are effective.

Players often lack abdominal or core strength. Abdominal exercises and various *rotational twists with a medicine ball* should be used to develop a strong muscular base in this area. This will focus on improving strength and power in the rotational muscles of the core area that are vital for swinging a bat or throwing a ball.



Trunk twists with a weighted Medicine Ball

Upper body strength is *not* the foundation of a *power* hitter or a *power* pitcher.

Successful hitters lead their swings with their *hips*, and their *upper body* follows, then their *arms*, then their *hands*, and finally the bat comes through. That is to say that the baseball bat is essentially an extension of your body when you swing.

Rotational velocity is the key to great power. The more rotational velocity you can create the more momentum you will produce. The greater your momentum when you contact the ball, the greater the force you transfer to the ball. Likewise, as a pitcher or fielder, the greater the velocity you create with your body, the greater the speed of your throw. Therefore, if we can teach the body – through training, both in the training room and on the baseball field – to create more rotational velocity and more force, then we can create a more powerful baseball player, both on the offensive and defensive.

Our hips are a powerhouse, and we must teach them how to load and store energy and then *explode* and unleash that energy. By creating high rotational velocity at our body's centre (*our core*) we begin a chain reaction of rotation where the velocity continues to build right up to the end of our proverbial whip, which, in the case of the baseball player, is the bat or ball. Rotation begins at the hips and continues through the shoulders, arms and finally the ball or bat.



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Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

Section 1

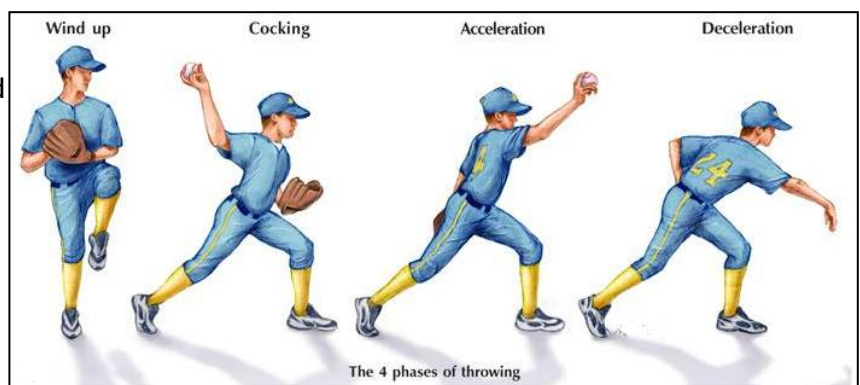
Baseball Training Focus

➤ Protecting the Shoulder

By far, the most common injury in baseball is injury to the *shoulder* or *rotator cuff*. Usually, pain in the shoulder (or elbow) is a result of **improper throwing mechanics**. Consequently, pain experienced during the throwing motion results in an inability to throw with velocity, causing what is commonly referred to as "dead arm" syndrome. The cause of pain is most often injury to either the bones or the soft-tissue structures of the shoulder joint or elbow.

A key factor is the ***unusually high stress placed on the shoulder joint generally and the rotator cuff muscles***. The act of pitching occurs at an angular velocity at the shoulder joint and is one of the *fastest human movements*. This places the shoulder joint and surrounding muscles at significant risk of injury from repetitive stress. Exercises that strengthen the anterior and posterior shoulder muscles in a balanced manner are vital. The shoulder should be flexible to allow for adequate external rotation necessary to throw at high speeds.

Deceleration is the phase of pitching most associated with injury. Specific exercises to develop the muscles responsible for deceleration (*mainly the rotator cuff and scapula muscles*) are crucial.



Throwing with greater velocity is NOT determined by; "how muscular one's shoulders are." Many people experience shoulder pain *during* or *after throwing*, as a result of **improperly using their core**, and simply relying on their arm and shoulder to do all the work. A good deal of time should be dedicated to strengthening your **centre of power**. The muscles of the *trunk* and *lower back* connect the upper and lower body. They support every twisting, turning, jumping and lateral movement. They are literally the link through which all movement passes.



United Kingdom Youth Baseball Association

Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

Section 1

Baseball Training Focus

➤ Protecting the Shoulder (cont)

Throwing arm injuries are on the rise in youth baseball programmes. After these injuries occur, many players are out for the season, and still others sustain injuries so severe that they cause permanent damage and are unable to continue playing baseball.

Five-minute stretching after play can help young players avoid throwing-arm pain.



Pitchers and catchers under the age of 15 often experience tightness of a shoulder ligament known as the posterior-inferior glenohumeral ligament. If this ligament is not stretched, it will become increasingly tighter and more prone to pain or injury as the player ages, if that player continues to play baseball.

Treatment

Treatment of shoulder pain in throwers is multi-faceted, but the best treatment is early recognition and prevention of injury. Pain is the earliest sign of injury, so coaches should regularly question throwers regarding the presence of shoulder pain. Other signs that should be recognised by coaches are; *loss of velocity, stamina, and poor throwing mechanics*. **Avoiding high pitch counts**, especially in younger players, and **avoiding excessive numbers of breaking pitches** (curve balls and sliders) have also been proven to decrease the chance of injury to the young throwing shoulder.

Immediate attention must be paid to a child who is experiencing *shoulder pain when throwing, or he or she may feel soreness in the shoulder for a few days afterwards*. You may notice that his pitches are slower or less controlled. There may be *swelling or tenderness around the upper arm or shoulder*. In the case of shoulder pain, an average of 3 months of rest with a gradual return to throwing is recommended, provided the athlete has no shoulder symptoms.

The ultimate goal of treatment for shoulder pain is to return the player to the field in a safe and timely manner, with a restored ability to throw with speed and accuracy. Initial treatment consists of resting the arm, thereby avoiding the activity that causes or increases the pain.



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Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

Section 1

Baseball Training Focus

➤ **Protecting the Shoulder** (cont)

The best way to prevent lasting shoulder injury is to follow the **UKYBA recommended guidelines for appropriate pitch count limits and proper rest between pitching appearances**. Most importantly, remember that children should not play through pain, and all pitchers should have rest periods between pitching appearances.

The following are UKYBA guidelines for pitchers that should be followed by all coaches:

Pitchers age 7 - 16:

Pitches in a day	Rest time
61 or more	4 days
41-60	3 days
21-40	2 days
1-20	1 day

Pitchers age 17 - 18:

Pitches in a day	Rest time
76 or more	4 days
51-75	3 days
26-50	2 days
1-25	1 day

What else can youth *pitchers* do to prevent injury?

1. Do not pitch through pain. Joint pain in the elbow or shoulder is one of the first signs of injury. Pitchers should be removed from pitching if they are feeling or showing signs of pain. Rest is required to allow time for the injured area to heal. If pain does not resolve after a 3-4 days of rest, consult a physician.
2. Do not pitch through fatigue. Research shows that pitchers who pitch through fatigue may be at greater risk for injury. Decreased ball velocity, ball control and/or ball command are all signs of fatigue.
3. Warm-up properly before all practices and games. Ten minutes of light jogging, cycling, or calisthenics before exercise will increase circulation to cold muscles, making them more pliable and less prone to injury.
4. Maintain core strength and stability.
5. Learn and practice proper pitching mechanics.
6. Avoid playing on more than one baseball team during a single season.
7. Take at least 3 consecutive months off from pitching per year.
8. Avoid playing other overhead sports such as volleyball, swimming, and tennis during the baseball season. When combined with baseball pitching, these can put a large amount of repetitive stress on a young pitcher's arm.



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Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

Section 1

Baseball Training Focus

➤ Protecting the Leg Muscles

There are several muscle groups in the thighs, but the ones we hear about most often, as they relate to injuries, are the quadriceps and hamstrings. To summarize the anatomy, the quadriceps are located on the front of the thigh and involve four muscles (rectus femoris, vastus medialis, vastus lateralis, and vastus intermedius), while the hamstrings are located on the back of the thigh and involve just three muscles (biceps femoris, semitendinosus, and semimembranosus).



Hamstring strains occur *more often* than quadriceps strains for a few reasons. As a multiple joint muscle, the hamstrings originate on the ischial tuberosity (the bony part of your backside) and then attach all the way down on the knee. Multiple joint muscles, such as the hamstring, gastrocnemius (calf), and biceps brachii (arm), are more prone to strain because those muscles are trying to perform several functions at once.

As the back leg is getting ready to push off and drive the body forward, the knee is moving into extension, and in some cases hyperextends. The hamstrings normally reflexively contract to protect the knee from further damage. At the same time, the hamstrings are also trying to contract consciously to bend the knee in preparation for bringing the leg around for the next stride. When injury occurs, the hamstrings are often stretched too far from the knee—they extend before they start contracting, reflexively and consciously at the same time. These reactions occur through different neural pathways. As a result, the contraction can cause tearing of the fibres, usually at the junction of the muscle and the tendon.



United Kingdom Youth Baseball Association

Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

Section 1

Baseball Training Focus

➤ Protecting the Leg Muscles (cont)

The *hamstrings* originate on the hip and pelvis and insert on the lower leg bones. This means they aid in the function of both the hip and the knee. Good strength and flexibility in these three muscles can increase performance and decrease injury and soreness. Anyone who has experienced a hamstring strain knows the level of frustration the injury can cause. What most people don't know is that weakness or inflexibility in the hamstrings can affect a number different body areas (hips, thighs, knee, lower back).

Hamstrings and the Lower Back

Poor flexibility in the hamstrings has been identified as a contributor to pain in the lower back. Essentially, inflexibility in the hamstrings puts stress on the hips and pelvis, where they originate. This stress can be great enough to impact the angle of the pelvis and lumbar, or lower, vertebrae. This may create muscle spasms and strain in the low back musculature. Increasing the strength and flexibility of the hamstring and lower back muscles can relieve many cases of lower back pain.



Injury Prevention

The best way to prevent injury is to stretch and strengthen your muscles. Stretching all the muscles of the hips and thighs for 15 to 30 seconds at least once per day is a good start. Stretching should ideally be done *after a mild warm-up* when the muscles are more elastic. When blood flow increases to the muscle, as it does with exercise, they become more pliable. Flexibility exercises can be done before and after activity, but **stretching following activity is generally more productive**. Stretching more than once per day is safe and may produce faster results.



United Kingdom Youth Baseball Association

Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

Section 1

Baseball Training Focus

EXAM

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United Kingdom Youth Baseball Association

Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

Section 2

Baseball Stretches

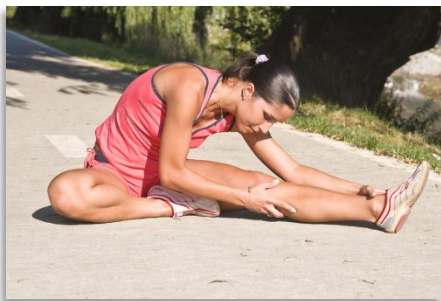
Flexibility training is perhaps the most undervalued component of conditioning. A more flexible athlete is a more mobile athlete. It allows enhanced movement around the field with greater ease and dexterity. Some other benefits may include an increase in body awareness and a promotion of relaxation in the muscle groups stretched – both of which may have positive implications for skill acquisition and performance. Two popular forms of stretching routines for *baseball players* are; **Static and Dynamic**.

➤ Static Stretching

For years, most athletes were taught to *stretch prior* to; working out, playing a game or competing in an event, and the type of stretching recommended is known as; **static stretching**. *Static passive stretching* has been used by coaches and athletes for years without question. *Static stretching* involves holding a muscle at the stretched position for 20 –30 seconds.

Static stretching is best done *after your workouts*. It has shown to decrease strength and power if done immediately before a workout or game. The stretch is held when you feel a nice stretch (or slight discomfort) until you feel the muscle relaxing.

Ironically, *static stretching*, used **just prior** to an event may actually be *detrimental to performance* and offer no protection from injury. There are 2 types of Static Stretches;



Static Passive flexibility – the ability to hold a stretch using body weight or some other external force. Using the *example to the left*, holding your leg out in front of you and resting it on the ground or a chair. The quadriceps are not required to hold the extended position.

Static Active flexibility – requires the strength of the **opposing muscle groups** to hold the limb in position for the stretch. For example, standing on one leg and holding the opposite leg out directly in front of you is classed as a static active stretch. The quadriceps actively hold the stretched limb.





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Section 2

Baseball Stretches

➤ Guidelines to Static Stretching

- You should be thoroughly warmed up before performing these exercises
- Stretch to just before the point of discomfort
- The feeling of tightness should diminish as you hold the stretch
- Breath out into the stretch. Avoid breath holding
- Hold each stretch for 10-30 seconds
- If tightness intensifies or you feel pain stop the stretch
- Shake out limbs between stretches
- Complete 2-3 stretches before moving onto the next exercise

Upper Body Static Stretches for Baseball

Front of Shoulder & Chest

This can be performed kneeling or standing. Clasp hands behind back and straighten arms. Raise hands as high as possible and bend forward from the waist and hold.



Back of Shoulder

Place one arm straight across chest. place hand on elbow and pull arm towards chest and hold. Repeat with other arm.



Triceps Stretch

Place one hand behind back with elbow in air. Place other hand on elbow and gently pull towards head. Hold and repeat with other arm.





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Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

Section 2

Baseball Stretches

➤ Guidelines to Static Stretching *(cont)*

Lower Body Static Stretches for Baseball

Glute Stretch

Sitting on floor with right leg bent, place right foot over left leg. Place left arm over right leg so elbow can be used to push right knee. Hold and repeat for other side.



Adductor Stretch

Stand with feet as wide apart as is comfortable. Shift weight to one side as knee bends. Reach towards extended foot and hold. Repeat for other side.



Single Leg Hamstring

Place leg out straight and bend the other so your foot is flat into your thigh. Bend forward from the waist keeping your back flat. Hold and repeat with the other leg.



Standing Quadriceps

Standing on one leg grab the bottom of one leg (just above ankle). Pull heel into buttocks and push the hips out. Your thigh should be perpendicular to the ground. Hold and repeat with the other leg.





United Kingdom Youth Baseball Association

Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

Section 2

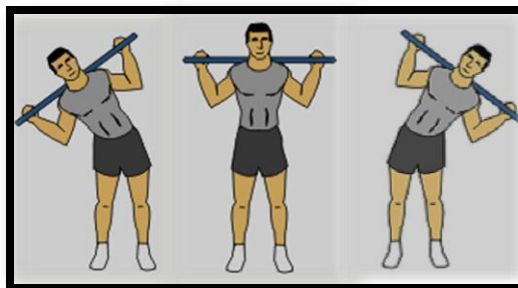
Baseball Stretches

➤ Dynamic Stretching

Dynamic stretches are best incorporated into your warm up routine **before** training or a competition. Dynamic stretches seem to be more effective at reducing muscle stiffness, which is thought to increase the likelihood of muscle tears. For this reason, many coaches and trainers now advocate static stretching *after* from competition to increase range of motion, and dynamic stretching *prior to* performing for injury prevention and preparation.



Dynamic Stretching – the ability to perform dynamic movements within the full range of motion in the joint. Common examples include twisting from side to side or kicking an imaginary ball. Dynamic flexibility is generally more sport-specific than other forms of stretching.



Dynamic stretching consists of functional based exercises which use sport specific movements to prepare the body for movement. Dynamic stretching, involves moving parts of your body and gradually increasing reach, speed of movement, or both. Do not confuse dynamic stretching with *ballistic stretching*. Dynamic stretching consists of controlled leg and arm swings that take you (gently) to the limits of your range of motion. * *Ballistic stretches* involve trying to force a part of the body *beyond* its range of motion. In dynamic stretches, there are no bounces or "jerky" movements.

Your workout should have a prescribed warm-up, but if it doesn't a **three – five minute total body warm-up**, (i.e., jogging, rope jumping, total body movement) should always precede a dynamic workout. The warm-up raises the body temperature, increases blood flow to the muscles, and lubricates the joints. Always remember **warm-up to stretch, do not stretch to warm-up**.



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Section 2

Baseball Stretches

➤ Dynamic Stretching *(cont)*

❖ Lower Body Dynamic Stretches for Baseball

Walking Lunges

(Hamstrings and Quadriceps)



Begin with feet together, with hands clasped behind your head. Take a step forward with one leg, and as you land squat down on the opposite leg until that knee almost touches the ground. Keep your back straight.



Alternate legs, bringing your knee up as you step into another lunge.



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Section 2

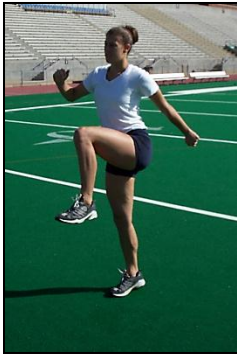
Baseball Stretches

➤ Dynamic Stretching *(cont)*

❖ Lower Body Dynamic Stretches for Baseball

Power Skip

(Hamstrings, Quadriceps, Glutes and prepares the body for full speed action)



The power skip is executed by doing an explosive, exaggerated skip while emphasizing height rather than distance. Emphasize a big arm swing and explosive knee lift. Lift one knee up as high as you can, while standing on the other leg. Repeat 20 times per leg.

Side-Step Runs

(To stretch the abductors, adductors, glutes, ankles and hips)



Stay on the balls of your feet with your hips in a low semi-squat position. Begin the drill by twisting your hips and crossing one leg in front of the other, bring your trail leg through, and cross your lead leg behind the trail leg. Your shoulders remain square through the entire drill.

Lying Knee Roll-over Stretch

(Hips, Lower Back – “Core” stretch)

While lying on your back, bend your knees and let them fall to one side. Keep your arms out to the side and let your back and hips rotate with your knees. Hold for 1–2 seconds and then switch sides.





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Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

Section 2

Baseball Stretches

➤ Dynamic Stretching *(cont)*

❖ Upper Body Dynamic Stretches for Baseball

Shoulder Twist

(Shoulder, Rotator)

- Stand with your arms out to the side creating a line with your arms that's as horizontal to the floor as possible.
- Start with very small circles and move both arms forward in the small circle movements for about 15 to 20 circles.
- Trace the small circles in the reverse direction, again with both arms moving at the same time.
- Move to larger circles, both frontwards and backwards.



Shoulder Stretch

(Shoulder, Rotator)



Keeping your arms straight, move arms in front of your body with vertical swings – these can be straight up and down or out to the sides a little.



United Kingdom Youth Baseball Association

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Section 2

Baseball Stretches

➤ Dynamic Stretching *(cont)*

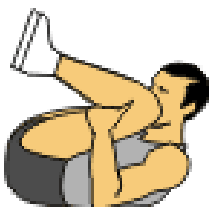
❖ Upper Body Dynamic Stretches for Baseball

Chest Stretch *(Chest, Shoulder)*

Keep elbows parallel to the ground and swing them back to open chest.



Back Stretch



Lie on your back and bring both your knees to your chest with hands clasped under back of knees. Roll forwards until your feet touch the floor and then immediately roll back until just before your head touches the floor.
Continue until you complete 10-15 full rolls.



United Kingdom Youth Baseball Association

Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

Section 2

Baseball Stretches

EXAM

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Module 2, Section 2 Baseball Stretches EXAM

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Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

Section 3

Plyometric Training for Baseball

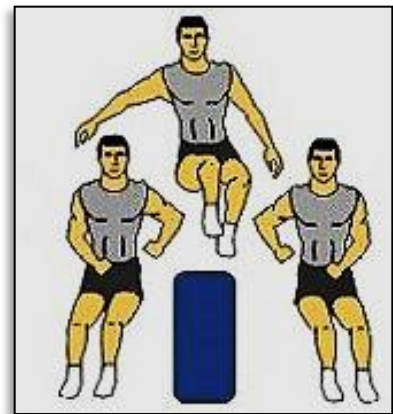
➤ Plyometric Training

Plyometrics originated as a training method in the secretive eastern block countries where it was referred to as “jump training.” As the eastern block countries rose to become powerhouses in sports, plyometric training was credited for much of their success. In the 1920s, the sport of track and field was the first to employ a systematic method of using plyometric-training methods. By the 1970s this method of power development was being used by other sports that required explosive power for successful competition.

Plyometrics can best be described as “explosive-reactive” power training. This type of exercise training is designed to produce fast, powerful movements, and improve the functions of the nervous system, generally for the purpose of improving performance in sports.

Plyometric movements, in which a muscle is **loaded** and then **contracted** in rapid sequence, use the strength, elasticity and innervation of the muscle and surrounding tissues to jump higher, run faster, throw farther, or hit harder, depending on the desired training goal.

Plyometrics are used to increase the speed or force of muscular contractions, providing the explosiveness needed for baseball movements, which require explosive, quickness for short bursts.



The stretching of the muscles, prior to the explosive contraction that follows, is often called “**loading**”. The faster and greater the load, the more powerful the reflex and subsequent contraction. A good example of this is watching successful baseball players hit a ball. By loading (cocking) and then exploding their hips open (un-loading), they propel their body towards an oncoming ball. This *Rotational velocity* (generated by the hips), while *shifting the weight* from the back leg to the front, allows baseball hitters to create momentum. The more rotational velocity you can create, the more momentum you will produce. This momentum is used to create a bigger and faster “load”. The response to this greater load is a greater contraction by the hips, which brings the arms, hands and bat – through the hitting zone. The same phenomenon exists with all explosive baseball actions, such as; throwing, base running, running after a ground or fly ball.



United Kingdom Youth Baseball Association

Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

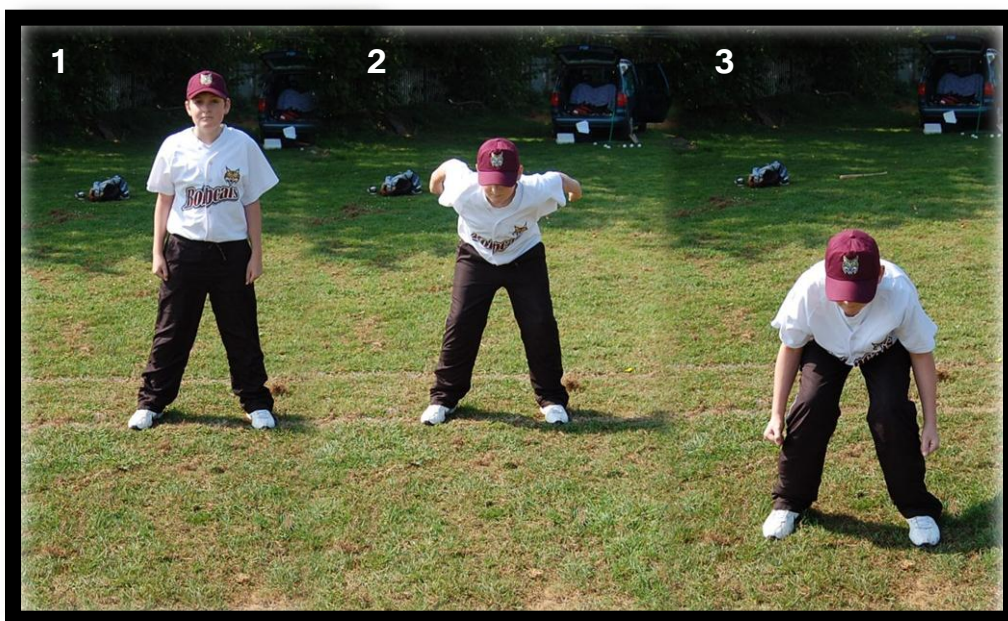
Section 3

Plyometric Training for Baseball

➤ Lower Body Plyometric Exercises

- *When performing a Plyometric training programme, your body should be warmed up via a short jog and Dynamic Stretches. Young children (ages 6–8) and heavily overweight people should avoid explosive training, until their strength is built up. In either instance, they should modify these exercises to keep them light, rather than heavily explosive.*

Jump Squats



- Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, trunk flexed forward slightly with back straight in a neutral position.
- Bend the knees in a squat position and throw the arms backwards as you explode upwards and forward.
- As you explode upwards and forward, drive your arms up, and extend the ankles to their maximum range.
- Do not hold a squat position before jumping up. Keep the time between dipping down and jumping up to a minimum.
- Land on both feet. Rest for 1–2 seconds and repeat for 10 repetitions.





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Section 3

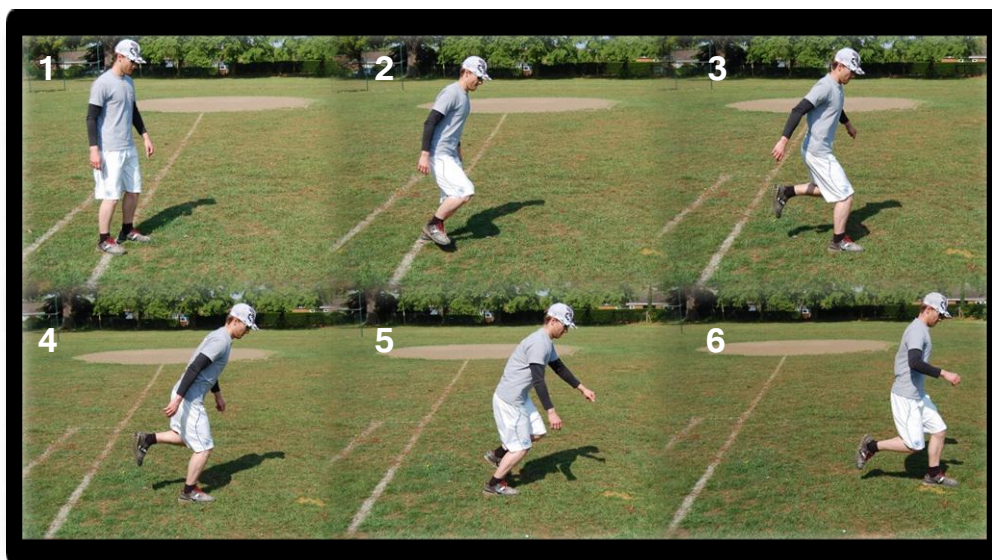
Plyometric Training for Baseball

Lateral Push offs



- Stand to the side of a box or bench and place the right foot on top of object.
- Push off the object using the right leg only and explode vertically as high as possible. Drive the arms forward and up for maximum height.
- Land with left foot on the object and right foot on the ground to the other side of the object.
- Repeat from this side. Do 10-15 repetitions per leg.

One Leg Lunge (advanced)



- Start with both legs shoulder width apart, then raise your right leg slightly, bending your knee.
- With the right knee slightly bent, propel your body forward with your left leg, reach forward with your right leg and land on your right leg – keeping it slightly bent when you land.
- Balance on your right leg and repeat the process to simulate an extended jog.
- Do 10 repetitions per leg.



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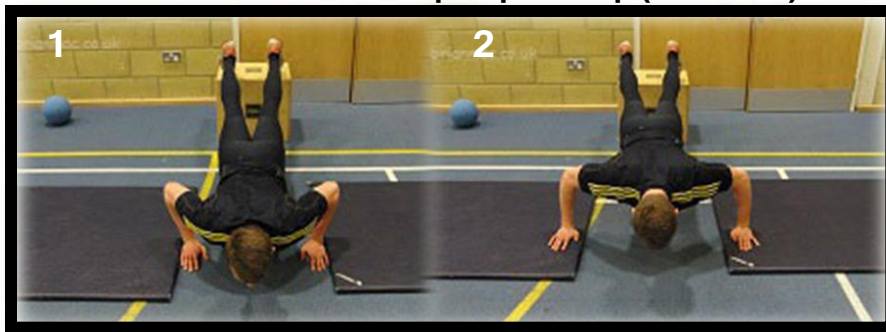
Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

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Plyometric Training for Baseball

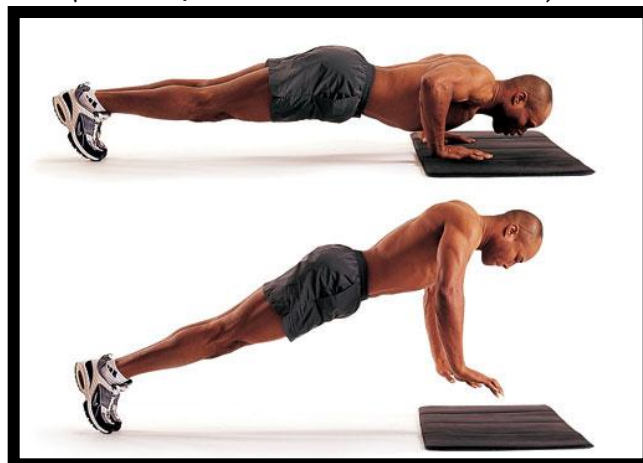
➤ Upper Body Plyometric Exercises

Incline Push Up Depth Jump (advanced)



- The two 3" mats (or another object that is 6" thick) are placed shoulder width apart.
- Place a 12" box (or bench) to elevate your feet above your shoulders when in a press up position.
- Face the floor in a press up position with your feet on the box or bench and your hands between the mats (or 6" object) push off from the ground with your hands and land with one hand on each mat.
- Push off the mats with both hands and back to the starting position.
- Keep the hand contact time on the mats (or 6" object) as short as possible.
10 repetitions.

Variation without elevating the legs *(can be performed on a flat surface)*





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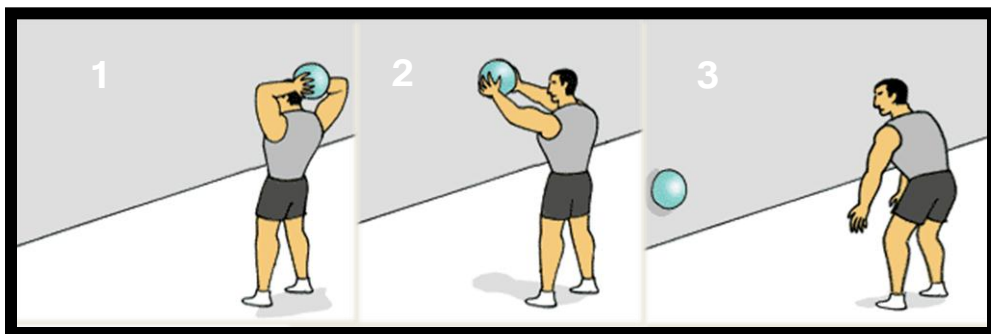
Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

Section 3

Plyometric Training for Baseball

➤ Upper Body Plyometric Exercises

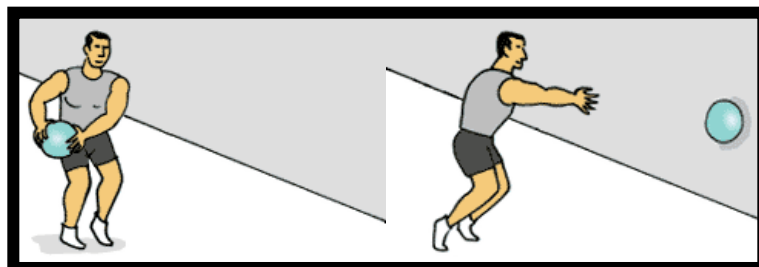
Overhead Throw



For the “Throw” exercises, you will need a medicine ball weighted at no more than 5kgs, depending on the age of the players. Players 8-10 should use 2-3kgs.

- Stand facing a wall, with your feet shoulder width apart.
- Raise the ball over and behind your head, and then forcefully, throw it at the wall.
- Catch the ball as it rebounds off the ground in front of the wall.
- If no wall is available, do the movements without throwing the ball. Stop as you are about to throw.
- Do 10 throws per set – 2 sets.

Side Throws



- Stand with feet hip-width apart; place left foot approximately one foot in front of right foot.
- Hold medicine ball with both hands and arms only slightly bent.
- Swing ball over to the right hip and forcefully underhand toss ball forward to a wall. Keep the stomach drawn in to maximize proper usage of muscle. Ideal for core strength.
- Catch ball on the bounce from the wall.
- If no wall is available, simulate the throw, but do not release the ball. 10-15 repetitions per side.



United Kingdom Youth Baseball Association

Module 2 – Baseball and Fitness

Section 3

Plyometric Training for Baseball

EXAM

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