

Opening Day: Approach & the Prep Step

Outdoor	2 hours	Arm-load: Light — build-up throwing only, nothing...
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OBJECTIVE

First practice of the year runs on two habits that touch every player on the field: naming a plan before stepping into the box, and landing ready as the ball reaches the hitting zone. Neither one needs a finished swing or a big arm. They need reps, and reps are what today is for.

BENCHMARKS THIS PLAN FEEDS

- B1 — Approach
- B5 — Prep step

PREP — BEFORE PLAYERS ARRIVE

Equipment	batting tee + L-screen + fungo + baseballs + gloves + helmets
Setup	Screen set at 35-40 ft for coach's BP, tee off to the side for the warm-up progression.
Staff	One coach on the screen keeps the rotation moving; a second runs the tee line if you have him.

PRACTICE TIMELINE

0:00-0:10	Dynamic warm-up (10 min) Run the routine, all 12 movements, down and back on each. Card's on its own sheet.
0:10-0:20	Catch play (10 min) Wrist flicks at 10 ft, knee drills at 30, feet set at 45, easing out toward 90 and settling on a line at 100 ft. Nothing past 120 ft today — that ceiling holds for the whole practice.
0:20-0:30	IF/OF/C daily work (10 min) Everybody to their own spot for ground balls, routes, and receiving off the fungo. — Drills: Two-hands ground-ball reps at each infield spot, fly-ball routes in the outfield, catcher receiving off a kneeling flip.
0:30-1:10	Attack benchmark 1 — Approach (40 min) Groups of 3, four rotations of 10 minutes, coach's BP from behind the screen at 35-40 ft. — Before he steps in, he tells you the pitch and the zone he's hunting. Five swings against that plan. — Whether the plan matches the swings is the read. A kid who says "middle-away, drive it the other way" and pulls the first fastball he sees didn't have a plan — he had a guess. — The other nine fill a full defensive alignment underneath: catcher, both corners, middle infield, all three outfield spots, with a spare rotating through. Live contact off a real bat is the best prep-step rep in the library, so that's their job while the plan work runs.
1:10-1:50	Attack benchmark 2 — Prep step (40 min) Same groups, same screen, but now the field is graded and the box isn't. — Fielders set up in an athletic ready position and time their landing to the pitch, not to the swing. Land as the ball gets to the zone, not when you hear the bat. — Ground balls and flies off live contact are the standard rep. A ball fielded from a flat-footed start is a rep that didn't count, whether or not he made the play. — Rotate hitters through the same three groups so nobody stands around waiting on a turn.

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1:50-2:00

Baserunning work (10 min)

Primary lead off each base, secondary lead as the pitch is thrown — shuffle, shuffle, last step landing as the ball reaches the plate. Cue: "your last step lands when the catcher catches it."

COACH'S NOTES

You'll get more silence than plans the first few times you ask a kid what he's hunting, and that shrug tells you where he's starting from. Push past "get a hit" until you get an actual zone and pitch — it doesn't have to be sophisticated, it has to exist. The prep-step work looks unglamorous next to live hitting, but it's what turns today's ground balls into outs all season, and it's cheap to build now before a flat-footed habit sets.