

Approach Lab: Call the Zone

Indoor	90 min	Tier: 1
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OBJECTIVE

Build the habit of naming a plan before the pitch — zone, pitch, situation — even when full consistency isn't there yet. B1 (Approach) is a conversation as much as a swing, and a gym gives you the quiet to run it without a game clock pushing you along.

BENCHMARKS THIS PLAN FEEDS

- B1 — Approach

PREP — BEFORE PLAYERS ARRIVE

Equipment	batting tee + short-toss net + baseballs + cones + gloves
Setup	cone or tape a strike zone grid in two cages — in, middle, away — so a named zone is a spot a kid can point to

PRACTICE TIMELINE

0:00-0:05	Dynamic warm-up (5 min) Run the routine, all 12 movements, down and back on each. Card's on its own sheet.
0:05-0:15	Throwing ladder (10 min) Partner throwing along the wall, wrist flicks through feet-set. Accuracy at a target, not distance.
0:15-0:55	Attack — Approach (40 min · 4 × 10 min) Four groups of three rotating through the cages. — C1 — Name it on the tee. He calls the pitch and the zone, then swings the plan he named. Eight swings, four different calls, no repeating the same one twice in a row. — C2 — Hold the plan. Short toss, three-pitch sequence. He states a plan out loud before the first pitch and has to hold it even when the pitch that shows up isn't the one he called. Taking a pitch he didn't ask for is a win — tell him so. — C3 — Plan against a count. Call a count before each round — 0-0, 2-0, 1-2 — and he names the plan that count demands before he steps in. — T4 — Glove work. Short-hop reps off a bucket, one at a time, clean transfer emphasized. Keeps hands sharp while the rest of the group works approach. — A kid who names "middle" every round has a default, not a plan. Ask him to call a pitch he'd usually take and hunt it on purpose.
0:55-1:10	Dailies: light ground-ball work (15 min) Infielders take simple ground balls at their own spot, one at a time. Clean transfer, no throw past a bucket a few feet away.
1:10-1:25	Close: "Name It and Prove It" (15 min) Two teams. Hitter states his plan and zone before stepping in. A hard-hit ball to the called field scores two, a take on a pitch outside the zone scores one, a swing outside the named zone scores nothing no matter where it lands. — A single off a pitch he had no business swinging at counts for zero. He'll argue it. Hold the rule anyway.
1:25-1:30	Wrap-up (5 min) Who defaulted to the same call every round and who held a plan through a bad first pitch is what this practice was built to show you.

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COACH'S NOTES

This will feel slow and a little awkward the first two times through, and a couple of kids will treat it as a joke. Run it anyway — the habit of walking in with a plan is what lets a hitter hold his ground when a pitcher won't cooperate with it. If time gets tight, protect the count-based round over the other two; it's the advanced version and it doesn't pay off until the basic habit has already landed.