

AGILITY TRAINING

Agility training promotes foot quickness, and the ability to turn and change direction quickly, a desirable quality for all players. But it is of special importance in softball to the catcher, short-stop, second baseman and the center fielder. It also applies to base running, so all players could benefit from some work in this area.

This program combines leg strength with agility exercises that have been proven over the years. Use it as a general conditioner or a supplement to meet your specific needs.

Some of the Skipping/Jumping exercises and the Circle Drill are adapted from, "Improving Foot Quickness in the High School Athlete"; Ollie Whaley, NSCA Journal, 1987.

These drills fall into four basic categories which we will call;

- a) SKIPPING/JUMPING
- b) CARIOCA
- c) CIRCLE DRILL
- d) STAR DRILL

Alternate them for variety, or to meet specific needs. With a little experience you will know which drills provide the most benefits for you.

SKIPPING/JUMPING

The main difference between these two terms is that in skipping a rope is used, whereas jumping is done without a rope. The same foot patterns apply, and workloads will vary with the degree of proficiency and conditioning.

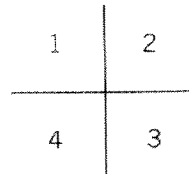
These are basic plyometric exercises so they will improve leg power as well as foot quickness. These are excellent drills for conditioning, agility and in the case of skipping, coordination.

There are five basic foot patterns to start with, but you may want to experiment with others of your own design. The five basic patterns are the basic one or two foot jump; straddle jump; shuffle, pause; shuffle; and cross-over. These are explained and illustrated on the next page.

Do sets of 10 to 50 repetitions (jumps) with at least 30 seconds rest between sets. Gradually work up to 200 total jumps per session.

ALTERNATE SKIPPING PROGRAM

1. Lay out a four square pattern on the ground or floor as shown.



Perform the following exercises in any order without stopping if possible. This is the ultimate goal.

- a) Straight jumps - 50 - both feet.
- b) Side to side (Square 4 to 3) 50 - both feet.
- c) Forward and back (Square 4 to 1) 50 - both feet.
- d) Boxer shuffle (two jumps right/left alternating) - 50
- e) One foot jumps up and back (Square 4 to 1) 25 - each foot.
- f) One foot side to side (Square 3 to 4) 25 - each foot.
- g) Triangle jumps (Square 1 to 2 to 4) 25 - one foot
Reverse direction - 25 other foot.
- h) Four square jumps (Square 1, 2, 3, 4) 50 - both feet
Alternate variation (Square 1, 3, 2, 4)

CARIOCAS

Sometimes referred to as a grapevine step, this consists of a series of running cross-over steps covering a specified distance. One length and walk back to the start position is one repetition. Use any distance desired.

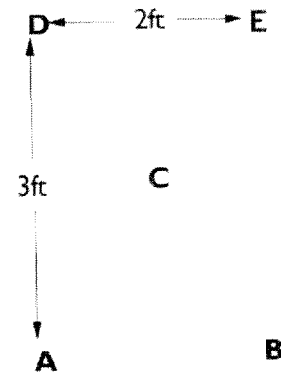
Start with: 3 sets x 2 repetitions - 3 min. rest between sets
Progress to: 3 sets x 3 repetitions - 5 min. rest between sets

CIRCLE DRILL

This is a series of intricate hopping patterns using one or both feet. Start by marking a rectangular box as illustrated. Then learn the patterns at slow speed before advancing to maximum.

Up and Back

1. Start at one end with feet on A and B.
2. Jump to C with both feet.
3. Jump to straddle position on D and E.
4. Move backwards in same pattern to A and B.
5. Repeat 5 more times.



Right Foot

1. After completing first drill feet are in A and B.
2. Jump to C on right foot only.
3. Move to D, E, C, A, B in order and repeat 5 more times.

Left Foot

1. Follow same pattern as for right foot and repeat 6 times.

Both Feet

1. Hop through same pattern with both feet together;
2. Repeat 6 times.

Turn Around

1. After previous pattern, both feet will end on position B.
2. Straddle jump to position A and B.
3. Jump with both feet to C.
4. Jump to straddle D and E.
5. Jump turn 180 degrees, landing on D and E facing opposite direction.
6. Jump with both feet to C, then to A and B.
7. Jump turn 180 degrees and repeat drill 5 more times.

Emphasis throughout the drill is on foot quickness. To increase motivation, keep track of your time through the patterns to see how much you can improve. A reasonable goal is to complete 6 repetitions of all five patterns in 60 seconds or so.

STAR DRILL

This drill combines forward, backward, side and carioca movements which apply at various times to all softball players. It can be used as a straight drill or, to add an element of competition, as a test. If the distance between touch points is far enough, conditioning will also become a factor in the drill.

X = Start

1. Sprint to #1, touch floor

Backward run to start
Touch X

2. Sprint to #2, touch floor

Backward run to start
Touch X

3. Sprint to #3, touch floor

Backward run to start
Touch X

4. Sprint to #4, touch floor

Backward run to start
Touch X

5. Side shuffle to #5, touch floor, shuffle back and touch X

6. Carioca (grapevine step) to #6, touch floor, carioca back, touch X

7. Side shuffle to #7, touch floor, shuffle back and touch X

8. Carioca to #8, touch floor, Carioca back and touch X

