Outfield and Fly Balls

Fly Ball Practice
All players will need to practice catching fly balls – infielders and outfielders. Avoid placing players in outfield positions and then hitting/throwing fly balls to one player at a time. Here are a few suggestions to help keep players constantly involved:

- Form several lines with one coach/adult in charge of each line. Coach throws soft fly ball directly at the first player in line. Player catches ball, throws it back to coach and moves to end of line. As players improve, throw the ball higher and away from players.
- Have players partner up and toss fly balls back and forth to each other.
- Form several lines with one coach/adult in charge of each line. Have players line up next to coach. Coach throws ball out in front of him while first player runs out to catch it (*ages 7 & up*)

Add competition to any of above drills by seeing how many fly balls one player or team can catch in a row or who can catch the highest fly ball, etc. (be creative)

Coaches can work side by side with their young player. The coach is able to look at the player from all angles and give the player immediate feedback and instruction.

Fielding Drill
Lining up your 8 and 9 year olds in medium to long right field. Using one player to play first base and another player to play 2nd base.

From a spot between first and second fly balls and ground balls are delivered to the outfielders. As the ball is in movement the coach yells first base or second base.

Evaluate proper fly ball and ground ball catch and release.

At times I make this a game and points are given for techniques and throws.

Angle Drill
Players pair up across from one another some distance away. Players take turns throwing balls to one another at extreme angles. Outfielders must run hard, cut off ball angle, then field the ball and come up with a good crow hop and throw the ball back, etc.

Over-Shoulder Drill
Outfielders line up in a single line. The first player up starts sprinting downfield, while another player throws the ball at different angles, making the outfielder react at catching the ball at different spots. Players rotate positions.

Ground Balls Drill
Players form a line down the field behind one another. The first player faces another player downfield, who throws a hard grounder to the outfielder. Depending on which technique is called, the outfielder will side straddle catch and come up throwing, or use the drop knee technique and come up throwing.
**Tennis Ball Drill**

For some great outfield practice I use a tennis racket & hit fly balls to my boys. The boys love this. It also helps them getting used to using two hands, the tennis balls like to bounce out of their gloves so they start using both hands. After a few practices you will notice a big difference in how much better they catch the ball. My age group is 10U. It works real good if you have a boy that is afraid of the ball. With the tennis ball you can teach him how to catch it & he will try because he knows it will not hurt. Once he starts catching them he will have the confidence for a baseball.

**Beat The Ball Drill**

Set up the defense and a hitter gets one soft toss from plate to put the ball in play, the harder the better, no bunting. It is the job of the defense to field it and throw to first, second, third, and home plate in succession before the runner gets around the bases. Fouls are outs. The way it develops is the kids try to hit liners where no defender stands, placing their hits and run like crazy….meanwhile, the defense is incredibly efficient at getting the ball in and throwing around the horn. The kids not playing a base all communicate and line themselves up in a good backup position in case of a bad throw…but to get an out each base must be tagged while in possession of the ball before the next base can be thrown to. A lot of outs can be made with clean throws, but one bad throw in the process usually makes it able for batter to score. If the runner scores the entire defense for the play must drop for 5 pushups and if the batter is out he must do 5. Keep a kid on deck to make it go smoothly and rotate the kids in the field to let everyone ‘play a base’.