



YOUTH BASEBALL

SUCCESS SYSTEM

Infield Skills and Drills

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Four Seam Grip

Setup

Line your infielders up facing you, each one with a ball and a glove.

Execution

Demonstrate the proper four seam grip:

- Take the middle and index fingers of your throwing hand, and place them perpendicular to the horseshoe of the seams on the baseball. The "horseshoe seam" should face into your ring finger of your throwing hand.
- NOTE: It's called the horseshoe seam simply because the seam itself looks like the shape of a horseshoe.
- Next, place your thumb directly beneath the baseball, resting on the smooth leather. Ideally, you should rest your thumb in the center of the horseshoe seam on the bottom part of the baseball.
- Grip this pitch softly, like an egg, in your fingertips. There should be a "gap" or space between the ball and your palm. This is the key to making a good, hard four-seam throw with maximal backspin and velocity. A loose grip minimizes "friction" between your hand and the baseball. The less friction, of course, the quicker the baseball can leave your hand.

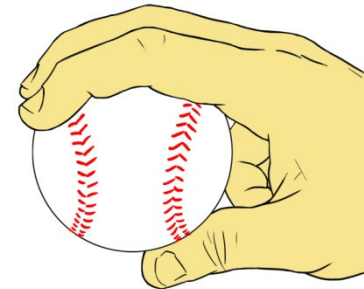
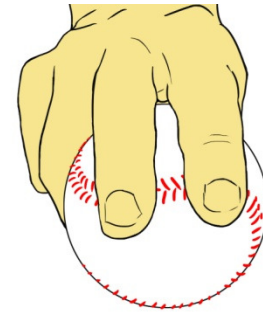
Have the players practice the grip with their eyes open, then with their eyes closed. Over time, they will develop a muscle memory and "feel" for the ball which will allow them to establish the proper four-seam grip in just a split second.

Once they have the grip down, separate them into pairs, facing each other, around 20-30 feet apart. Practice catching the ball, establishing the four seam grip, then throwing it back to your partner.

Coaching Tips

Always establish the grip before pulling the ball out of the glove. Don't allow your players to fiddle with the grip as they cock back to throw, as this is a major cause of bobbled balls and costly errors.

FOUR SEAM GRIP



Preliminary Stance Drill

Setup

Line up your infielders with around 4-6 feet of space between them, facing home plate. A pitcher stands at the mound with a ball.

Execution

On your signal, the players will drop into the ready position, as described below. Then, as the pitcher goes into his windup, the players will take two short steps, timed with the pitcher's delivery so the second step hits the ground as the ball is released.

Coaching Points

- In the ready position, the fielder's feet should be slightly wider than shoulder-width apart, with the knees bent and the weight over the balls of the feet. His head should be facing his partner with his eyes on the ball. The hands should hang low between the legs, with the glove open wide. From this ready position, the player can get a good jump on the ball and move quickly in the direction it is hit.
- As the pitch is being delivered, infielders should be watching the direction and speed of the ball, and reading the hitter's swing.
- After taking the second step, lean slightly toward the direction the ball is likely to be hit. Inside pitches are more likely to be pulled, while outside pitches are more likely to be hit to the opposite field.



Charge the Ball Drill

Setup

Set up your players on the outer edge of the infield between second and third base, with around 4-6 feet of space between them, facing home plate. For each infielder, place one ball on the ground just inside the basepath.

Execution

On your signal, the players will drop into the ready position. Then, on your second signal, they will charge their individual ball, break down into fielding position, pick it up with both hands, step towards first base and cock the arm to throw.

In phase 2, the players will line up single file behind shortstop. Coach will roll the ball softly towards, them and they will charge it, field it and make a strong throw to first, using the same fundamentals.

Coaching Points

- The fielder should circle slightly around the ball so that his momentum is going towards first base as he fields it. Be aggressive, come to the ball, and get as close to the target as possible.
- To field the ball off the ground, the fielder's knees should be bent with his rear end lowered to knee level. His back should be almost parallel to the ground, and both arms should be outstretched in front of the body.
- The throwing side foot should be slightly behind the glove side foot (the toe lined up with the arch)
- The back of the fielder's glove should be on the ground with the throwing hand either above it or alongside it. The fielder's eyes should be focused on the ball.
- The fielder should then scoop the ball up and trap and trap it with the throwing hand. The player then cushions the ball toward his body with "soft" hands, bringing the hands to the belt area (this is called funneling the ball) as he moves into throwing position.
- After retrieving the ball, the fielder will crossover step with the throwing side foot as he grips the ball, then step toward first with the glove side foot as he goes into his throwing motion
- Coach should check the player's grip after he freezes, making sure he has established a good four seam grip



Glove Drill

Setup

Group your infielders into pairs and set them up, facing each other, around 10-15 feet apart. Both players are wearing their gloves, and standing in an athletic stance. One player in each pair has the ball.

Execution

On the coach's signal, the player without the ball will drop down into the ready position, while his partner slowly rolls the ball along the ground in his direction.

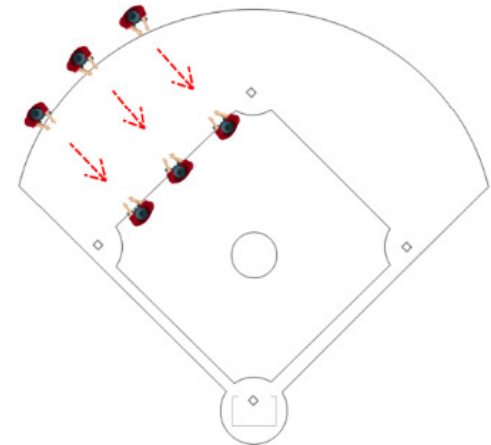
The fielder will then roll the ball back to his partner. Throw 10 balls to the middle, 10 to the right and 10 to the left.

Then, have the thrower throw randomly to different directions, maintaining the slow speed and keeping the ball rolling along the ground like a bowling ball.

In phase 2 of this drill, partners should throw short-hops instead of ground balls.

Coaching Tips

- In the ready position, the fielder's feet should be slightly wider than shoulder-width apart, with the knees bent and the weight over the balls of the feet. His head should be facing his partner with his eyes on the ball. The hands should hang low between the legs, with the glove open wide. From this ready position, the player can get a good jump on the ball and move quickly in the direction it is hit.
- The player's feet should stay planted on the ground throughout the drill. The focus is on moving the glove to meet the ball.
- Make sure the fielder's glove is positioned way out in front of the body. The more extension the better.
- The back of the fielder's glove should be flat on the ground with the throwing hand either above it or alongside it.
- The fielder's eyes should be focused on the ball. When the ball arrives, the player should watch it into the glove and then trap it with the throwing hand.
- The player then cushions the ball toward his body with "soft" hands, bringing the hands to the belt area (this is called funneling the ball) as he moves into throwing position.
- To backhand the ball, shift the weight toward the backhand side while keeping the feet planted. Bring the glove across the body, and flip it inside out to open the pocket toward the ball.



Short Hop Drill

Setup

Group your infielders into pairs and set them up, facing each other, around 10-15 feet apart. Both players are wearing their gloves, and standing in an athletic ready position. One player in each pair has the ball.

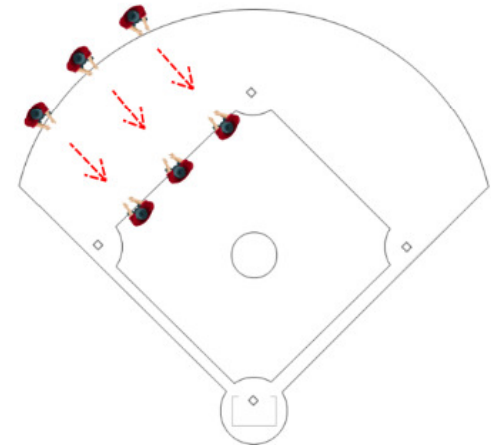
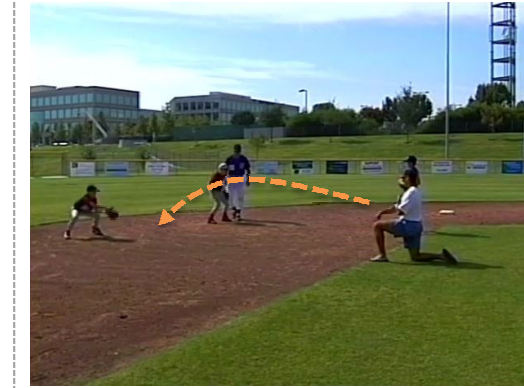
Execution

On the coach's signal, the players without the ball will drop down into ready position as described above. The player with the ball will throw a soft "short-hop" to his partner, aiming to bounce the ball around 2 feet in front of the fielder's toes.

The player will field the short hop, secure the ball, then throw a short hop back to his partner.

Coaching Tips

- When fielding the short hop, the glove position is extremely important. The glove should be extended out directly in front of the body, reaching out toward the ball with the palm up.
- The fielder should attempt to catch the ball immediately after it hits the ground, which will reduce the unpredictability of a bad hop.
- When the ball arrives, the player should watch it into the glove and then trap it with the throwing hand. The player then cushions the ball toward his body with "soft" hands, bringing the hands to the belt area (this is called funneling the ball) as he moves into throwing position.
- Make sure the glove is low enough to the ground, to avoid the ball passing underneath it and through the fielder's legs



Read The Hop Drill

Setup

Your fielders should line up in single file at shortstop or second base. Coach will be at home plate with a fungo bat and balls.

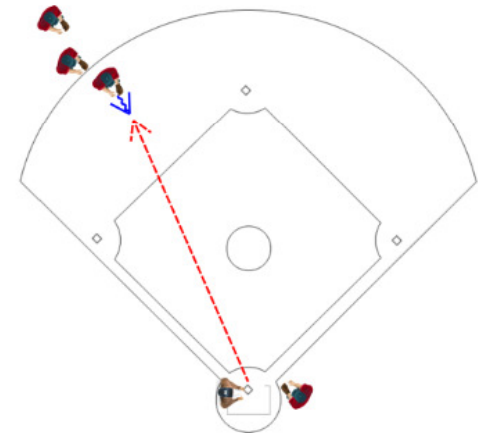
Execution

On the coach's signal, the players will drop down into ready position. The coach will then hit a fungo ground ball to the infielder. He will charge the ball aggressively, field it and make a strong throw to first base.

The coach will vary the speed and type of ground ball, giving the player a variety of short hops, long hops, slow rollers and straight ground balls. Also vary the direction of the hit, going to the left, right, and directly at the fielder.

Coaching Tips

- The easiest ball to field is a big hop, which allows the fielder to see the trajectory and speed of the ball early, then line himself up to make a play. With practice, short hops can also become routine, if the fielder can scoop them directly off the ground before they can move too much in any direction. Regular ground balls are the most difficult, as the ball makes contact with the ground multiple times, and can make multiple changes of height and direction.
- Time your footwork with the pitch so that you can quickly move in any direction (avoid being flat footed)
- Read the placement of the pitch and angle of the bat to determine if the ball will be pulled or hit to the opposite field. Try to see which way the head of the bat is going, shift your weight in that direction, and get a good jump on the ball.
- Take the proper angle or route to the ball
- Charge hard to get to the ball faster and shorten the distance of the throw
- Circle the ball when possible, so that your momentum is going toward the target (first base) as you field it and begin your throw
- Align your body toward the target as you break down to field the ball
- Follow through toward the target
- On slow rollers, field the ball with the glove and quickly transfer it to the bare hand to make the throw. If the ball has stopped rolling completely, field it with your bare hand.



Scolinas Drill

Setup

Set up your full infield minus your pitcher for this drill. The catcher begins with the ball behind the plate.

Execution

This drill requires a continuous series of choreographed throws, one after another. When teaching it, the coach will need to yell out the throws one by one to remind the players of the sequence. Over time, they will memorize the sequence and be able to run the drill on their own.

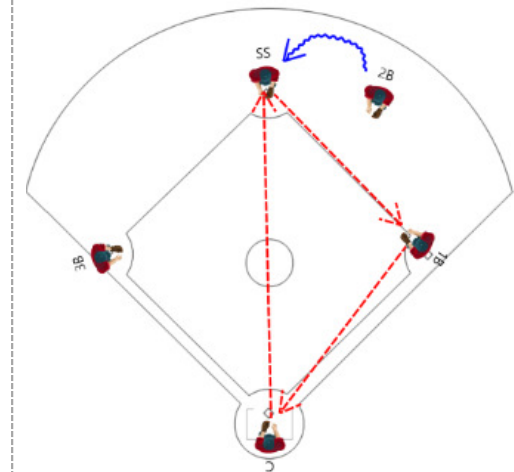
The sequence goes as follows:

1. Catcher to shortstop (covering second base)
2. Shortstop to first base
3. First base to catcher
4. Catcher to third base
5. Third base to second base (covering second base)
6. Second base to first base
7. First base to catcher

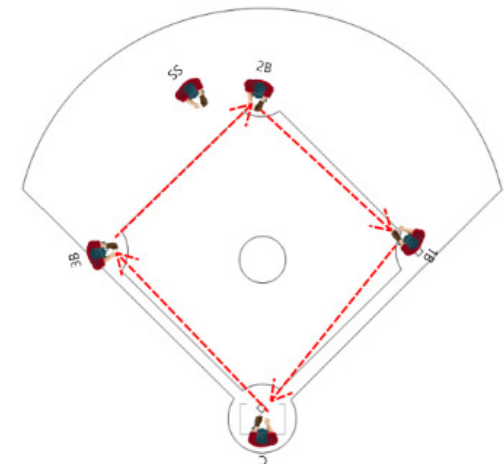
That makes one rotation. See if how many rotations your players can make in a fixed time limit (30 seconds to 1 minute) without making an error.

Coaching Tips

- Throw the ball with a four seam grip
- Practice your footwork so that you are moving into your next throw as you catch and grip the ball
- Feel free to vary the sequence to work on specific fielding situations (i.e. double plays, force outs etc)



CATCHER > SHORSTOP > FIRST BASE > CATCHER



CATCHER > THIRD > SECOND > FIRST > CATCHER

Double Play Drill

Setup

You will need a shortstop, second baseman, and first baseman for this drill. The coach stands at the pitcher's mound (for beginners) or at home plate (for experienced players) with the ball.

Execution

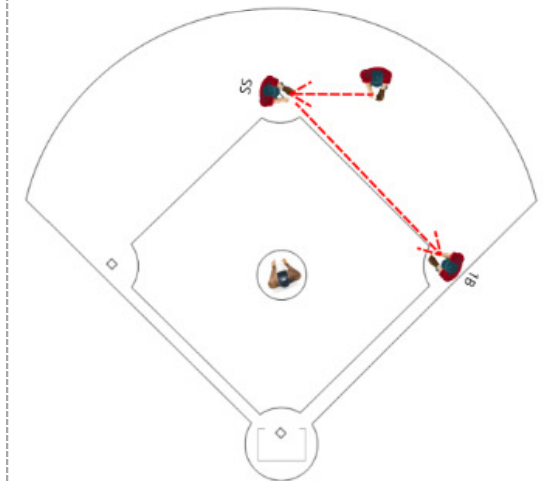
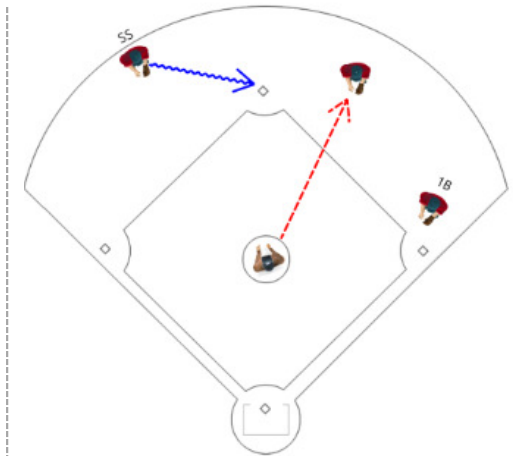
On the coach's signal, the players will drop down into ready position. He will then roll a ground ball to the second baseman, who will check his distance to the bag, then either tag second base himself or throw to the shortstop. After tagging second, the fielder will make the throw to first to complete the double play.

In phase 2, the coach will roll a ground ball to the shortstop, who will read the play, then either tag second base himself or throw to the second baseman. After tagging second, the fielder will make the throw to first to complete the double play.

The coach should vary the speed and type of ground ball, giving the player a variety of short hops, long hops, slow rollers and straight ground balls. Also vary the direction of the ball, going to the left, right, and directly at the fielder. For more advanced players, you can run this same drill hitting fungos from home plate, instead of rolling the ball from the pitcher's mound.

Coaching Tips

- The player fielding the ball should call "Ball" and the player covering second should call "Bag"
- When covering second base, the fielder should approach it with short choppy steps, and stay a few steps off the bag until the throw is released to him. This will allow him to adjust his angle of approach to catch the ball, tag the base, pivot and throw in a smooth, continuous motion
- Try to tag the bag with the inside of the foot and continue momentum towards the first base target
- On a bad throw, the player covering second should "think like a first baseman" - getting the force-out is his #1 priority
- General rules for second basemen and short stops
- 1-2 steps from the bag - tag it yourself
- 3-4 steps from the bag - make a "fluffy" underhand toss
- 5-6 steps from the bag - make a firm underhand toss or backhand
- More than 6 steps from bag - drop to one knee and throw overhand
- If the baserunner is going to collide with you at second, try to get slightly airborne after making this throw to first. This will prevent you from getting your cleats stuck in the ground, and reduce the risk of a knee or ankle getting jammed on impact.
- On short throws, try to "show" the ball to your teammate right out of your glove, which will help him track it into the glove more easily



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