



Hitting Fundamentals and Techniques

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Dry Run Hitting

Setup

Spread the hitters out across the field with at least 5 strides of space in every direction. Each player has a bat and faces the coach.

Execution

Lead the players through the phases of the swing one at a time (relax - ready position - stride - swing) ensuring each player is using the proper sequence. Call each phase out one at a time. Demonstrate the different mechanics and swing path for different types of pitches. Complete 5-10 swings for each type of pitch.

Coaching Tips

- To make the proper stride, try telling your players to "walk away from the hands." The hands stay back while the front foot makes a small step forward. The stride should be a "soft stride" - with 80% of the weight on the back foot
- Outside pitch: keep the hips slightly closed, try to make contact deeper in the hitting zone, and hit the ball to the opposite field. Middle pitch: open the hips slightly, try to make contact in the middle of the plate, and hit the ball to center field. Inside pitch: open the hips even more, try to make contact out in front of the plate, and pull the ball on contact
- The back hip always goes to the target. Practice placing one hand on the back hip, taking the stride and pointing the finger (and hip) in the direction you would hit the ball
- Always stride to the same spot regardless of the pitch location
- Use visualization to help players picture how they will swing on different types of pitches
- Low pitch: take the same stride and keep the hips at the same level. Adjust the hands lower to make contact. High pitch: take the same stride and keep the hips at the same level. Adjust the hands higher to make contact
- Keep the hands inside the ball to create a shorter, more compact swing. Avoid looping or casting the bat around the plate.
- Be short to the ball and long after you hit it to generate more power. Extend the hands outward and make a long follow through after contact.



Stick Drill

4

Setup

Cut a 3/4" dowel to the length of a long bat. The hitter will set up over the plate in his normal stance.

Execution

The goal is to take the hitter through a series of swings. Each time he swings, he should try to make the "whooshing" sound go in the direction he's trying to hit the ball.

To practice an outside pitch, he should try to make the "whoosh" go towards the opposite field. To hit an middle pitch, he should try to make the "whoosh" go to center field. To hit an inside pitch, he should try to make the "whoosh" go to left field (for a right handed hitter).

Take 5-10 swings for each type of pitch you are working on.

Coaching Tips

This is a great drill a hitter can perform at home since the whooshing sound provides instant feedback on the direction of the swing. The hitter can make adjustments to his swing path to generate the sound he is looking for



Bag Drill

Setup

Take a large punching bag and position it at a height that approximates the strike zone for your hitter. Secure it against a fence or a pole with duct tape, velcro straps or rope. The hitter should set up in his normal stance facing the punching bag.

Execution

Hitter will go through his normal swing sequence (relax - ready position - stride - swing) and make contact by swinging the bat into the punching bag.

Practice hitting the middle pitch by setting up with the front foot lined up with the middle of the bag. Practice hitting the outside pitch by moving forward, so the bat makes contact with the bag at back part of the hitting zone. Work on the inside pitch by moving backwards slightly, making contact with the bag in the front of the hitting zone.

Also practice hitting high, middle, and low pitches by adjusting the hands to the pitch location. Take 5-10 swings for each type of pitch you are working on.

Coaching Tips

- On contact, the bottom hand should be palm down while the top hand is palm down.



Batting T Drill

Setup

You'll need a bucket of balls, a home plate, a tee, and a net to hit into. The hitter will set up over the plate in his normal stance.

Execution

Take 5-10 swings with the ball in the middle of the plate, practicing hitting to center field. Take 5-10 swings with the ball on the outside of the plate, moving the tee further back in the hitting zone.

Take 5-10 swings with the ball on the inside of the plate, moving the tee forward in the hitting zone.

Coaching Tips

- Make sure the hitter separates the stride and swing. This will allow them to sit back on off-speed pitches without committing early.
- Tell the hitter to try and hit the "outside" of the ball to pull it. Hit the "inside" of the ball to go opposite field.
- Regardless of the pitch location, the stance should be square to the plate. Instead of opening or closing the stance, open or close the hips during the swing to adjust to the location of the pitch.
- Try "working the fingers" during the relaxation stage of the swing. This will keep the players grip loose and avoid strangling the bat and stiffening up.



Two Hand Ball Toss Drill

Setup

The coach will be kneeling or sitting around 10-12 feet away from the hitter on a 45 degree angle with a bucket of balls. The coach will start with one ball in each hand. The hitter will be set up in his normal stance facing a net. For safety reasons, you may want to use whiffle balls for this drill. Even better, have the coach sit behind a screen for protection.

Execution

The goal of this drill to work on the sequence of the swing - separating the stride and the swing especially.

To begin each repetition, the coach will bring his left hand forward and his right hand back. This is the cue for the hitter to take his stride. Then, the coach reverses the position of his hands (bringing the left hand back and right hand forward) and soft tosses the ball to the hitter with his right hand. The batter will then swing and make contact into the net. Complete 25 reps.

Coaching Tips

- Start by bringing the right hand back very slowly and deliberately, waiting for the stride, then coming forward and releasing the ball. This will separate the stride and swing dramatically , into two separate motions
- As the hitter gets the hang of it, you can speed up the transition and make the entire swing sequence more fluid.



Pepper Drill

Setup

With a group of 4 players, set up one hitter approximately 20 feet away from 3 fielders in ready position. One of the fielders has the ball, while the batter assumes his normal stance.

Execution

The fielders form a line facing the batter with around 5 feet of space between them. One end of the line is the "front" and the other end is the "back."

One of the fielders throws the ball to the batter, who attempts to hit grounders to the fielders standing in the line. When a fielder cleanly plays the ball, he throws it back to the batter, generally as quickly as possible, who tries to hit the ball again to the fielders. If the fielder makes an error fielding the ball, he must move to the back of the line. If the batter hits a foul ball (generally, hits it behind him) or strikes swinging at the ball, he is retired as batter, becomes a fielder, and moves to the end of the line. The fielder at the front of the line then becomes the batter.

If the batter hits a line drive or pop-up to the fielders, whoever catches the ball, regardless of their position in the line, becomes the new batter; the batter moves to the end of the line.

You can also play a "points" version of this game, where a swing and miss is 5 points, a foul ball 5 points, and a pop-up or "too-hard" ball is 5 points. Once the batter reaches 20 points, he rotates to the back of the fielding line.

You can play this game for about 10 minutes during practice, or use it as a pre-game warmup. Make sure all the players get a chance to hit.

Coaching Tips

- The goal of this drill is to help hitters improve their hand eye coordination and make better contact, while helping fielders work on their fielding fundamentals as well.
- With younger players, encourage them to choke up on the bat and make a short, compact swing, focusing on contact instead of power
- More experienced players can move towards making something close to a full swing
- Try to keep the groups to 4 or less with this drill to get the most amount of reps, but you can also play with 2 or 3 players
- For a variation, try having players bunt the ball instead of swinging



Target Hitting Drill

Setup

You'll need a bucket of balls, a hitter, and a coach for this drill. If you have a pitching screen, the coach will stand behind the screen and feed soft toss pitches to him using real baseballs. If you don't have a screen, use soft training balls.

Set up four cones in a semi-circle approximately 15-20 feet from the hitter and 10-15 feet apart (depending on how much space you have available).

Execution

The coach will start by soft tossing pitches down the middle of the plate. The hitter will try to hit them through the middle gap in the cones (or center field).

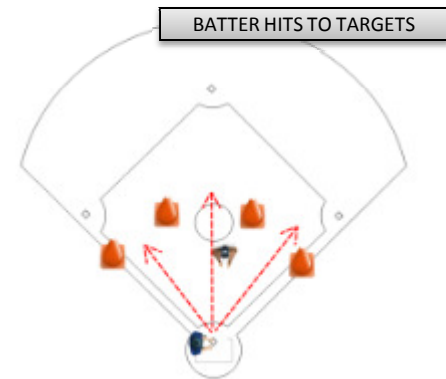
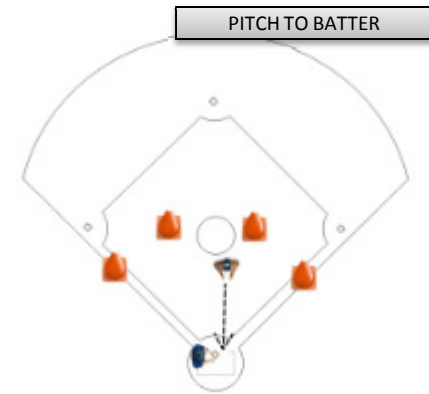
Next, the pitcher will throw to the outside of the plate. The hitter will allow the ball to get deep in the hitting zone and hit it through the gap in the cones on the right (for a right handed hitter).

Finally, the coach will throw to the inside of the plate. The hitter will make contact out in front and try to pull the ball through the gap in the cones on the left (for a right handed hitter).

Allow each player 20-30 total pitches and count the number of successful hits to the intended target.

Coaching Tips

- Once the hitter gets the concept, mix up the pitch locations and force them to react with the appropriate swing
- On middle pitches, batters should aim to hit the back half of the ball
- On outside pitches, batters should aim to hit the inside of the ball
- On inside pitches, batters should aim to hit the outside of the ball



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YOUTH BASEBALL

SUCCESS SYSTEM

Pitching Skills and Drills

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Target Throwing Drill

Goal

This can be used as a warmup drill to get loose before a more intense pitching workout. It also helps with command and control, and allows pitchers to experiment with different grips.

Setup

Place two players approximately 46-60 feet apart - around the same distance as the gap between the pitching mound and home plate at your level of play. Both players have gloves and are standing in an athletic ready position. One player in each pair has the ball.

Execution

On the coach's signal, the first player will throw to a specific target on the second player's body.

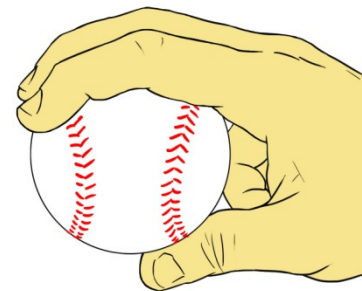
1. Right shoulder
2. Right hip
3. Right knee
4. Left shoulder
5. Left hip
6. Left knee

Coaching Tips

- This should be a relaxed, low intensity drill used for warmup.
- Look for a smooth, fluid throwing motion and good rotation on the ball.
- The receiving player should place his glove at the target point
- Players should use a four seam grip for maximum accuracy. This would apply for all throws made in the field, as well as any straight fastball thrown by a pitcher



FOUR SEAM GRIP



Dry Run Pitching Drill

Goal

To help pitchers understand and develop the phases of the pitching motion, in a slow, controlled manner that allows the coach to make adjustments and corrections.

Setup

Line up your pitchers facing the coach with about 4-5 feet of space between them. They will wear gloves but do not need a ball for this drill.

Execution

Take your pitchers through each phase of the pitching motion one by one, stopping at the end of each phase to make adjustments and corrections.

Phase 1: Stance

- The pitcher's weight should be evenly distributed on both feet
- Eyes should be facing the target
- The glove should be palm up and the throwing hand palm down to conceal the ball

Phase 2: Pivot and Balance

- Take a short "rocker step" with the stride foot (glove side foot) that goes backward, away from the rubber
- The step should be short, and compact so the pitcher's head remains over the ball side foot.
- Following the rocker step, the pivot foot (ball side foot) will square off parallel to the rubber
- Bring the stride leg up into a controlled motion to transfer the pitcher's weight into the pivot leg
- Hold the "balance" position with the stride leg up and balance until the coach says stop

(cont'd on next page)



Dry Run Pitching Drill (continued)

Phase 3: Separation and Stride

- After the stride leg reaches its highest point of elevation, the pitcher will separate his hands in a thumbs down position, while beginning his stride toward home plate
- Perform a controlled "fall" towards home plate, with the head, glove side knee, elbow and shoulder leading the way
- Make sure to keep a firm back pivot leg, rather than collapsing it down into a "drop and drive" motion. This will help pitchers keep the ball release point high, and develop pitches that travel on a downward plane toward the hitter
- Upon foot strike of the stride leg, the arms and body should form a "T" position. Minimize stress on the stride leg by landing with a bent knee.

Phase 4: Release and follow through

- After achieving the "T" position, the throwing shoulder will accelerate explosively toward the plate for the release and follow through
- The pitcher's head should move to directly over the stride leg, while the throwing shoulder, arms and upper torso extend toward home plate
- As the throwing arm moves forward, the throwing elbow should be even or slightly higher than the throwing shoulder
- The elbow snaps to full extension
- The wrist should be straight and firm, while the fingers stay on top of the ball
- The pivot foot heel rotates up and out, then comes off the rubber to complete the weight transfer from the back foot to the front foot

Progress through each of the phases one by one, providing corrections and adjustments along the way. Once the player is comfortable, with phase 1, have them complete phase 1 and 2 together, then stop. Then add phase 3 and stop. Then add phase 4 to create the complete pitching delivery.



Stick Drill

Goal

To improve arm and hand speed, and help develop the proper release point.

Setup

Line up your pitchers facing the coach with about 4-5 feet of space between them, wearing their gloves. Instead of a ball in the pitching hand, they will hold a light wooden dowel or stick approximately 18-24 inches in length.

Execution

The pitchers will go through their complete pitching motion, keeping the stick in the pitching hand throughout. The pitcher should explode toward home plate and finish with the throwing arm outside of the stride leg. Complete 10-15 reps.

Coaching Tips

- This drill is great for developing arm and hand speed. It provides instant feedback to the pitcher - a louder whipping noise generated by the stick translates into more velocity on the pitch.
- Pay attention to where the whipping noise is being generated, which will correspond to where the ball is being released.
- The pitcher should hear the sound right in front of the bill of their cap and off the glove-side eye. If the sound is too high or too low, have them make small adjustments until it's right.

Towel Drill

Goal

To improve extension and develop the proper release point on the pitch.

Setup

The pitcher will set up across from you around 9-10 feet away. Instead of a ball, the he will be holding a medium sized knotted towel between the pitching fingers. The coach will kneel down, and hold up a glove or similar target at the pitcher's release point.

Execution

The pitcher will go through his normal delivery so that the towel snaps down onto the target.

Coaching Tips

- Avoid over-striding or losing your balance. The extension should come by reaching forward with the chest and head, and extending the arm out toward the target
- Watch your pitcher's alignment. The stride should be directly towards home plate



Stationary Stride With Heel Over

Goal

To teach the proper motion of the pivot foot during the pitching delivery.

Setup

Line up your pitchers facing you, with about 4-5 feet of space between them, wearing a glove but without a ball.

Execution

Begin in a stationary "T" position with the stride foot forward and the arm cocked back.

Then, in slow motion, deliberately bring the arm forward in the throwing motion while reaching forward with the chest and head. Finish with the arm fully extended across the stride leg.

The focus for this drill is the motion of the pivot foot. The toe should stay planted while the heel lifts and rotates to the outside.

Coaching Tips

- Make sure your pitcher stays balanced and under control throughout the entire delivery
- Keep the stride knee inside the stride foot, with the weight on the inside of the stride foot
- Reach forward with the chest and head, while staying balanced



HEEL OVER

Circle over the Cup Drill

Goal

To develop the proper weight transfer, from pivot foot to stride foot, during the follow-through phase of the pitching delivery.

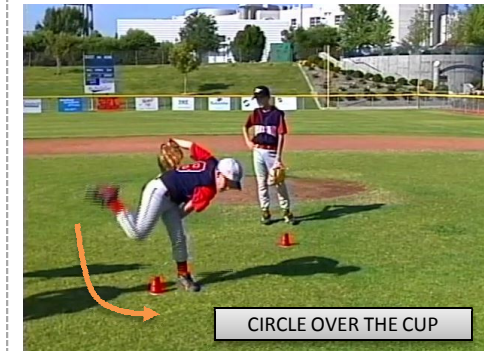
Setup

Line up your pitchers facing you, with about 6-8 feet of space between them, wearing a glove but without a ball. Place a plastic cup on the ground approximately 12 inches to the inside of the stride foot.

Execution

Begin in a stationary "T" position with the stride foot forward and the arm cocked back. On the coaches command, bring the throwing arm forward and drive towards the target in the simulate the release and follow through.

The focus of this drill is the pivot foot. After lifting and rotating the heel out, lift the back foot off the ground and bring it up and over the plastic cup in a circular motion. Finish by softly placing the pivot foot toe down, with the heel facing out, completing the weight transfer.



Bottom Out Drill

Goal

To develop the proper arm motion during the separation phase of the delivery. Getting the throwing arm up with the correct timing.

Setup

Line up your pitchers facing you, with about 4-5 feet of space between them, wearing a glove but without a ball.

Execution

Begin in a stationary stride position, with the stride foot forward, and the hands together at waist level. Slowly drop the hands down to "bottom out" then lift and separate the hands while keeping the thumbs down. Bring the throwing arm back while extending the glove arm out in front of the body, creating the "T" position. Then, slowly bring the throwing arm forward in the release and follow through, rolling the pivot foot heel up and over.

Coaching Tips

- Focus on getting the throwing arm up, then releasing the ball on a downward plane toward home plate
- To generate more power, pull the glove arm in towards the hip and brush it against the rib cage as the throwing arm comes forward. Rotate the glove from a thumb down position to a thumb up position.



One Hop Throwing

Goal

To improve arm separation, getting the throwing arm up and releasing the ball on a downhill plane.

Setup

Place two players approximately 40-50 feet apart. Both players have gloves and are standing in an athletic ready position. One player in each pair has the ball. Place a cone about 2/3 of the distance between the pitcher and catcher.

Execution

The pitcher should start in the stationary stride position, with the stride foot forward and hands at chest level. On the coach's command, he will separate the hands, bring the throwing arm up then explode forward and release the ball, trying to one-hop it just in front of the cone. The pitcher will take 10 throws, then switch positions with the catcher.

Coaching Tips

- Focus on getting arm up while keeping the fingers on top of the ball
- The wrist should be straight and firm
- Follow through, circle the pivot foot around and finish on the pivot foot toe



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Baserunning Skills and Drills

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Form Running Drills

Line your players up at one side of the field and take them through the following progression. These drills will help your players learn to run more efficiently, and also provide a valuable warm-up before your baseball-specific baserunning drills.

- **High knees:** Lean slightly forward, pump the arms, and run, driving the knees high while keeping the toes flexed upward. Drive the hands and arms to counter-balance the body and only contact the ground with the ball of the foot.
- **Hell to Buttocks (Buttkickers):** Run forward while trying to kick yourself in the glute with your heel on each stride. Focus on keeping the rest of your body still and simply flicking your lower leg backward.
- **Grapevines:** Standing upright with your head and torso facing forward, move laterally in one direction by placing your trailing leg in front of the lead leg. Then move the lead leg in that same lateral direction and place the trailing leg in front of the lead leg. Maintain a fluid motion with your arms rotating in the opposite direction from the legs.
- **Bounding:** Use an exaggerated skipping motion to thrust your body into the air off one leg, then the other. The focus should be on a powerful leap into the air and a quick (but not super fast) cadence. Your arm motion should be synced to the opposite leg's action, holding steady for the brief moment while you're off the ground.
- **Running Backwards:** Although it will seem awkward at first, try to replicate your forward running motion while moving backward. You'll still be pushing off of your forefoot and swinging your arms, but you'll be lunging backward with your hamstrings and using core muscles to stabilize differently than you're used to while moving forward. Focus on form, not on speed.



Lead Drill

Setup

Create 3 or 4 lines of players in the outfield, facing the coach.

Execution

On the coaches signal, the first row of players will get into the lead-off position facing home plate. On a second signal, the players will take two lateral shuffle steps, then make a crossover step, bringing the left foot in front of the right foot, turn the torso and shoulders and sprint for about 60 yards. Once they reach the other end the next group of players can go.

Coaching Tips

- In the lead position, the player should be down in an athletic stance with the feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart, the weight on the insides of the feet, and hands hanging loose between this knees. Balance is important - you should be able to bolt for the next base or dive back if necessary.
- As you extend your lead away from the base, use small shuffle steps. Taking long steps or crossing your legs over can put you momentarily off-balance, and therefore makes you vulnerable to a pick-off. Only make the crossover when you've made the decision to run at full speed toward the next base.
- Avoid taking a "false step" with the right foot before making the crossover step. Keep the right foot planted and push off to gain momentum
- After the crossover, stay low for the first 3 or 4 steps, then explode upwards and forward while extending the stride length



Turn to the Base Drill

Setup

Create 3 or 4 lines of players in the outfield, facing the coach.

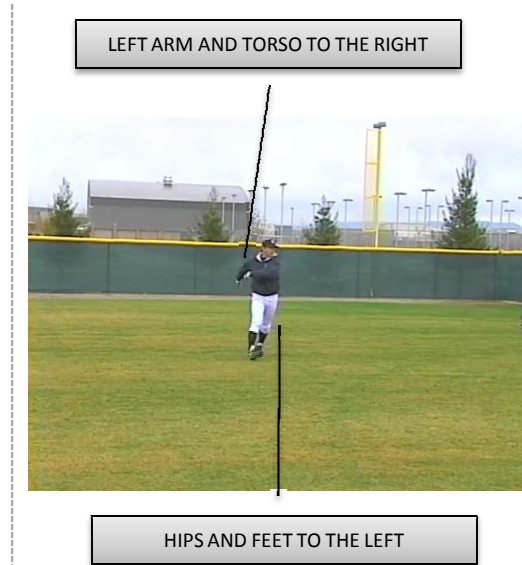
Execution

The goal of this drill is to help train players to turn the shoulders away from the next base and get the left arm across the body. This provides more leverage to turn the hips and feet in the opposite direction and get a faster, more efficient turn to the next base.

Going half-speed, the first player in each line will take five steps toward the coach. then turn quickly rotate his shoulders to the right and bring his left arm across his body, while simultaneously turning his hips and feet to the left. He will then continue at half speed for five more steps, then go to the back of the line.

Coaching Tips

- Keep the arms pumping with each step to maintain balance, and make the turn in rhythm
- Throwing the arm across the chest and turning the shoulder is done to help make a sharp turn, but if it creates a break in rhythm, it will be counter productive
- This movement will feel awkward and unnatural for some kids. Exaggerate it in practice to help develop muscle memory.



Sequence Drill

Setup

Divide your team into 4 groups. Station each group at a point halfway down each baseline.

- Group 1 halfway between home and first
- Group 2 halfway between first and second
- Group 3 halfway between second and third
- Group 4 halfway between third and home

Execution

The drill begins with the player at the front of each line proceeding to the next base, then executing a turn using the proper fundamentals. He then advances to the next line, going from first base, to second base, to third base to home.

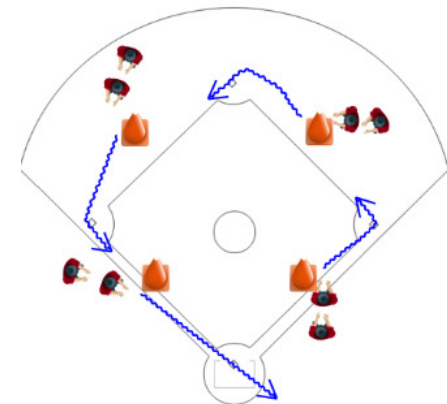
There are four phases to this drill:

1. Walk through
2. Jog through (approximately half speed)
3. Run through at three quarter speed
4. Run through at full speed

Note: start at phase 1 and do not proceed to the next phase until the players have demonstrated the proper fundamentals.

Coaching Tips

- Try to tag the inside corner of the base with the left foot. But don't change your running rhythm in order to do this. (over time the left foot tag will become more natural)
- To make the turn, throw the left arm across the chest and turn the shoulders to the right, while the hips and feet turn to the left (the direction of the next base)
- To help your players remember to this, place a coach behind the bag, and have them reach across their bodies with the left arm and touch his chest as they make the turn
- Try to "run in a square" and cut towards each base on the sharpest possible angle



Turning for the Double Drill

Setup

Line up your players behind home plate. Place a cone about half of the way between first and second.

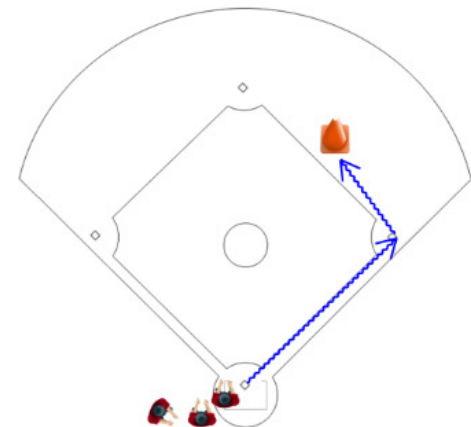
Execution

On the coach's signal the first player in line will sprint from the batter's box to first at full speed. He will make an aggressive turn towards second base and continue to the cone, then break down into a position where he can return to first or continue to second if he chooses.

As soon as the first player touches the bag, the second player will start running, and so on.

Coaching Tips

- The goal of this drill is to train your players to run aggressively to first base, then make an aggressive turn towards second.
- At the youth level, fielding errors are common. The aggressive turn will give your players the opportunity to turn singles into doubles if the ball is slow coming in from the outfield.
- To "break down" at the cone, lower your base, get your butt toward the ground, keep the feet moving and your head on a swivel.



Bent Leg Sliding Drill

Setup

Have your players spread out on a patch of soft grass with around 5-6 feet of space between them.

Execution

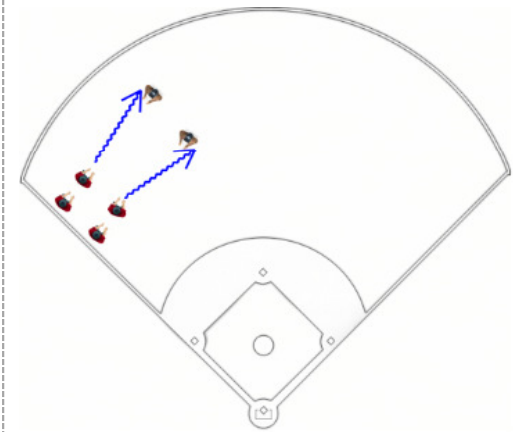
The coach should get on the ground and demonstrate the proper technique for a bent leg slide, with your players following along. Sit down on your butt, keeping one leg straight (with a slight flex in the knee) and the other leg bent underneath into a "figure 4" position. The hands should be thrown back and up, with the head up, watching the target.

Walk through the group of players and make adjustments, ensuring all players have the basic technique down.

In phase 2, we will work on sliding into a base while running. Line the players up and have them run 10-15 feet, break down, then slide into a base. As the player approaches the base, he should begin to squat and shift his body weight down toward the grass. With one leg straight and one leg bent, roll back the rear end, and sit on the grass with your momentum going forward.

Coaching Tips

- This drill is performed with the shoes off to help players get comfortable with the technique without the risk of their cleats snagging on the grass
- The faster you go into the slide, the easier it is on your body. If you slow down, you have a tendency to stick in the ground and there's more risk for injury
- The player should be sliding on his rear end, not his side
- The straight leg should have a slight bend in it and not be completely locked out. This will prevent it from "sticking" in the grass and prevent injury
- Make sure to practice this drill in the soft grass to start. Players can wear sliding shorts or an extra pair of sweat pants while they are learning the technique
- To simulate more of a game situation, hold a glove and ball on one side of the base, and ask the player to slide to the opposite side to avoid being tagged
- To make a pop-up slide, keep the front foot up slightly and catch the base with your heel as you slide in. Your momentum will push you up toward and allow you to stand.



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Bread and Butter Position Drills

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Catchers – Stance Drill

Setup

The catchers stand facing the coach with around 4-5 feet of space between them. You can practice this with gloves only or full equipment.

Execution

1. Help the players get into the proper catcher stance by using the following cues:
2. Get in an athletic stance, with the feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart
3. Drop your elbows to your knees with the back flat
4. Point the toes slightly to the outside
5. Keep the knees inside the feet
6. Shift your weight back and forth from side to side, while staying in the stance
7. Slowly get lower and lower, shifting back and forth until you reach a comfortable position



Catchers - Step to the Ball Drill

Setup

The catchers are down in their stance with the glove up, facing the coach. You can practice this with gloves only or full equipment.

Execution

While facing the players, the coach will point to the right or the left. The catchers will immediately take a short, controlled step in that direction with the outside foot (staying down in their stance), then move back to the middle position.

Once they have the movements down, slowly lob a baseball the left or right of the catcher, instead of pointing. Rotate through each of the players, throwing each of the ball one at a time while the other players mimic the movement (but do not receive a ball).

Coaching Tips

- The head should stay level as the catcher moves side to side
- Place slightly more weight on the glove side foot, which will allow the catcher to shift to the non-glove (riskier) side more quickly



Catchers - Grip Drill

Setup

The catchers are in their stance, facing the coach with around 4-5 feet of space between them. You can practice this with gloves only or full equipment.

Execution

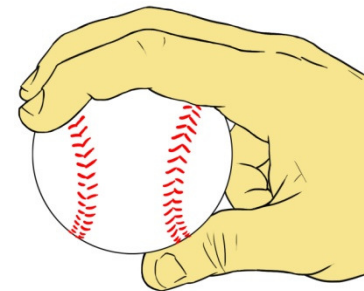
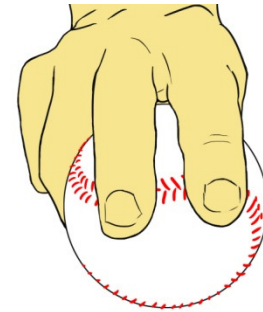
The coach will lob the ball to the right or left side of one of the catchers. The catcher will step to correct side make the catch. Then, in one fluid motion, the catcher will rise, and step forward with the glove side foot, while reaching into the glove to grip the ball. Cock back the arm to throw, then freeze.

Once the players get the hang of it, they can play catch back and forth, focusing each time on getting a firm grip before separating the glove hand and throwing hand, then cocking back to throw.

Coaching Tips

- Practice using a four-seam grip by taking the middle and index fingers of your throwing hand, and placing them perpendicular to the horseshoe of the seams on the baseball. This allows you to use the seams to pull down and get maximum backward rotation, helping the ball fly straight and true.
- 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.
- Over time, players 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

FOUR SEAM GRIP



Catchers - Ball in the Dirt Drill

Setup

The catchers are in their stance, facing the coach with around 4-5 feet of space between them. You can practice this with gloves only or full equipment.

Execution

From about 5-10 feet away, the coach will toss the ball softly into the dirt, directly in front of the catcher. With the ball in mid-air, the catcher will quickly lower himself to block it by first dropping the butt down, then softly lowering the knees to the ground

Coaching Tips

Catchers must be in a stance that allows their first move to be down, rather than up when they begin to execute the block. The easiest way to accomplish this is to insure that their feet are far enough apart so their heel are in contact with the ground, toes are pointed up the baselines and their thighs are parallel to the ground.

If they are in a deep crouch then their hips will have to go up before they can begin to move towards the ground. A deep crouch will only add to the amount of time it takes to block a ball by making the athlete travel upward before they are able to drive to the ground.

(continued on next page)



Catchers - Ball in the Dirt Drill

Work on the following cues when teaching catchers to block balls in the dirt.

- Replace your feet with your knees in one, fluid motion: Drive your knees into the ground to where your feet were (about shoulder-width apart, with your upper body centered between them).
- Clear your feet: So that you can get to your knees easier, clear away your feet by sliding them out to the side of your body. Keep your shins on the ground and your toes pointed back and away from you to be in the best position to block the ball.
- Drop your mitt: As you see the ball approaching the dirt, drop your mitt between your legs. The web of your mitt should be in contact with the ground, and the palm of your glove should be squared towards the pitch. Your fingers will be below the ball.
- Tuck your arms: As you drop your glove, keep your throwing hand poised above the mitt or tight to your throwing-side. Your glove-side arm should be tight to your body, making a larger blocking area.
- Angle forward: Your upper body should be straightened and angled forward, over the ball. By doing this, you can knock down the ball and deflect it straight into the ground, rather than away from you.
- Keep your eyes down: Tuck your chin and always watch the ball.

Try mixing it up by throwing dirt balls to the left, right and middle of the catcher. As the catcher gets the technique down, put on full equipment and begin throwing dirt balls from a longer range and with more velocity

Catchers - Bunt Fielding Drill

Setup

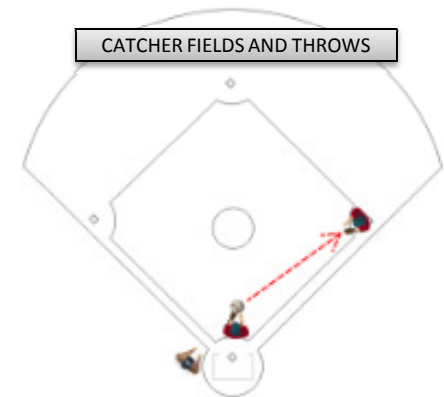
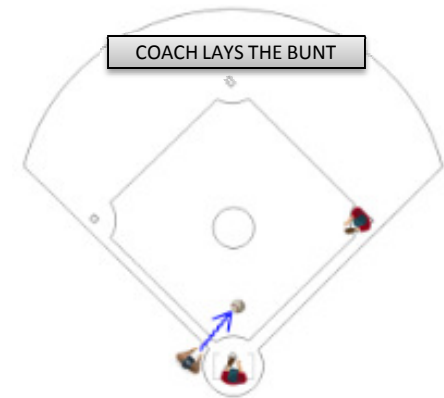
Line up the catchers single file behind home plate, with the first player in line in his stance. The second player (or a coach) stands directly behind the first player, holding a ball.

Execution

To begin the drill, the player with the ball simulates a bunt by tossing the ball softly past the first player and into the infield. The catcher will immediately spring from his stance, sprint to the ball under control, field it cleanly and throw it to first base.

Coaching Tips

- Make sure to pick the ball up with both hands, while simultaneously lining up the feet to throw to first base.



Infielders - Barehand Catch Drill

Setup

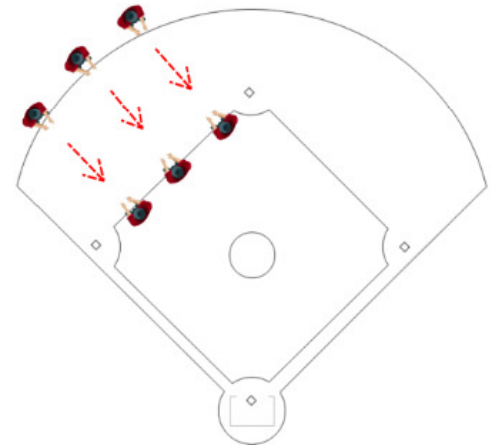
Group your infielders into pairs and set them up, facing each other, around 10-15 feet apart. Both players are in an athletic stance. One player in each pair has the ball. You do not need gloves for this drill.

Execution

Each pair will toss the ball back and forth, catching it barehanded using the hand the glove is normally on. The object is to catch the ball without actually closing the fingers around it. Instead, practice cradling the ball and cushion its impact with the hand and fingers, but avoid the urge to squeeze the fingers to secure it.

Coaching Tips

- Improve your hand-eye coordination by focusing on a specific seam of the ball, and following it all the way from the thrower's hand into your hand
- After 5 consecutive catches each player should take a step back. Continue moving back until a ball is missed, then take one step forward and begin the count again.



Infielders - Back of the 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 ready stance. One player in each pair has the ball.

Execution

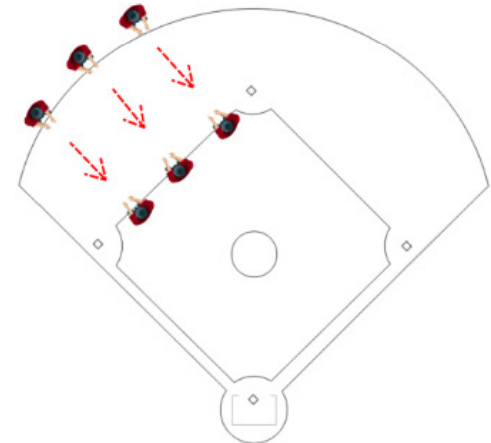
Each pair will toss the ball back and forth, catching it by trapping the ball between the back of the glove and the throwing hand. Use the back of the glove to cushion the impact, while securing the ball with the throwing hand at the same time.

Coaching Tips

- Try to trap the ball out in front of the body, which will allow you space to bring the hands toward the midsection to cushion the ball's impact
- After 5 consecutive catches each player should take a step back. Continue moving back until a ball is missed, then take one step forward and begin the count again.



CATCH BALL ON BACK OF GLOVE



Infielders - Open Pocket 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

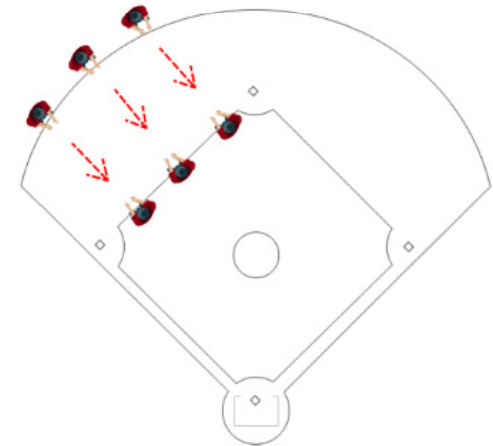
Each pair will toss the ball back and forth, catching it in the glove while keeping the pocket open.

Coaching Tips

- Try to catch the ball out in front of the body with the palm up, then pull the glove back toward the midsection to cushion the impact and help the ball stay in place
- This is a useful drill for second basemen and shortstops because it allows them to catch the ball with an open pocket, then quickly pull it out to complete a double play throw



GLOVE STAYS OPEN ON CATCH



Infielders - 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.

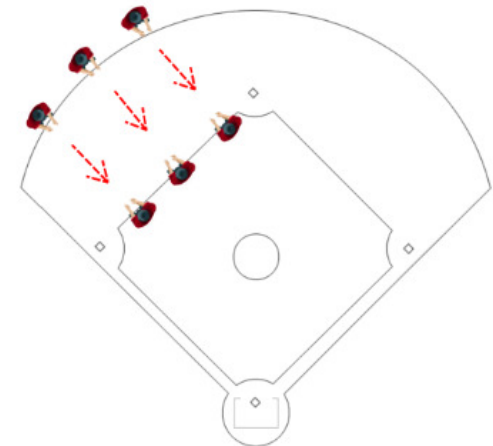
Then, have the thrower throw randomly to different directions, maintaining the slow speed and keeping the ball rolling along the ground like a bowling ball.

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.
- To field the ball off the ground, the fielder's knees should be bent and the buttocks 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 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.
- 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.



GLOVE FLAT ON THE GROUND



Infielders - 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.

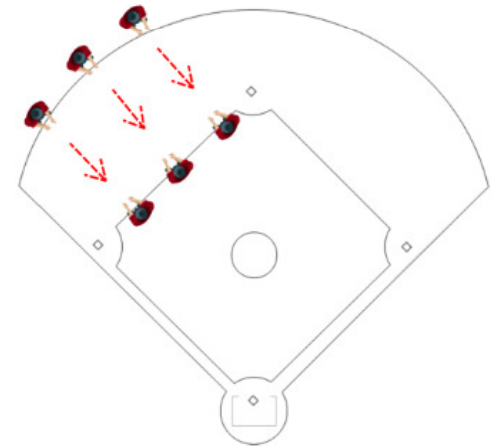
The player will field the short hop, secure the ball, then throw a short hop back to his partner.

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 to the ground, to avoid the ball passing underneath it and through the fielder's legs



FIELD THE SHORT HOP DIRECTLY
OFF THE GROUND



Outfielders- Ground Ball Drill Progression

Setup

The outfielders will line up single file in the outfield facing home plate. A coach stands at home plate with a fungo bat and balls. An additional coach or player stands to the side of home plate to receive throws from the fielders.

Execution

The coach will hit a ground ball to the first player in the outfielders line. The outfielder will charge hard at the ball, breakdown, field the ball using the Knee Method, Semi-Knee Method or Pro Method, then make an accurate throw back to home plate. The coach will then hit a ground ball to the next player, as the first player rotates to the back of the line.

Coaching Tips

- The **Knee Method** is typically taught to young players as the safest and most reliable way to field a ground ball in the outfield. You can also use this technique when there are no runners on base, when the ground is very bumpy, or when there is no chance of throwing a runner out.
- The outfielder should charge the ball hard for the first 4 or 5 steps, then decrease his speed, get under control, and break down to field the ball.
- To field the ball, drop to the throwing side knee (the right knee for right handed players) and put the back of the glove flat on the ground between the legs. Watch the ball into the glove, trap it with the throwing hand, then rise up and step into the throw.
- The outfielder should center his body in front of the ball, so he can block it with his torso if it takes a bad hop.
- The **Semi-Knee Method** is a faster, but slightly riskier way to field a outfield grounder. The technique is the same as the Knee Method, except the outfielder will only drop the throwing-side knee halfway to the ground while fielding the ball. This will allow him to move into his throwing motion more quickly, and have a better chance at throwing out a runner.
- The **Pro Method** (or Scoop Method) is the riskiest way to field an outfield grounder and should be used only in situations where the game will be lost if the fielder doesn't get the ball in quickly. This technique is for a do-or-die situation in which the tying or winning run is attempting to score and the outfielder must make a quick throw to the infield. The outfielder runs at the ball and scoops it up while on the move, placing the glove to the outside of the glove-side leg (instead of between the legs). If the ball is missed, it can run all the way to the fence, so use this technique with caution!



KNEE METHOD



SEMI KNEE METHOD



PRO METHOD

Outfielders - Fly Ball Footwork Drill

Setup

The outfielders will line up single file in the outfield facing home plate. A coach stands at home plate with a fungo bat and balls. An additional coach or player stands to the side of home plate to receive throws from the fielders.

Execution

The coach will hit a soft fly ball to the first player in the outfielders line. The player will approach the fly ball under control then, using the proper footwork, catch the ball and immediately move into this throwing motion, delivering the ball back to home plate.

Coaching Tips

The proper footwork requires three steps in total to catch, grip, and throw the ball.

Step 1: CATCH: Catch the ball with the glove side foot forward

Step 2: GRIP: While you gather the ball into your throwing hand, take a second step with the throwing side foot.

Step 3: THROW: As you go into your throwing motion, take a final step with the glove side foot and release the ball with your momentum going forward.

- For a right-handed fielder, the step sequence would go left-right-left
- Keep the feet moving with short choppy steps as the ball is in the air, which will make it easier to step with the correct foot as you catch.



Outfield Agility Drill

Setup

Place your fielders in the outfield with around 8-10 feet of space between them, facing the coach.

Execution

The coach will go through a series of signals one a time, which the players will respond to with a specific movement.

- Point right: crossover step with the left foot, then sprint to the right for 3 steps
- Point left: crossover step with the right foot, then sprint to the left for 3 steps
- Point back right: drop step with the right foot, then sprint back and to the right for 3 steps
- Point back left: drop step with the left foot, then sprint back and to the left for 3 steps
- Point to the ground: drop straight down into a pushup position, then pop back up

Coaching Tips

- Make sure your players aren't taking small "false steps" before making the crossover or drop step (this is common, especially with younger kids).
- To make the drill more physically challenging, have the players "chop" their feet up and down continuously between each signal
- The players eyes should remain on the coach at all times
- For younger kids, try playing this game as a variation of "Simon Says." If you precede your instruction with "Coach Says" - then the players should complete the movement. If you do not say "Coach Says" - the players should stand still in place or "chop" their feet up and down. This will improve their focus and concentration.



Outfielders - Isolated Feet Throwing Drill

Setup

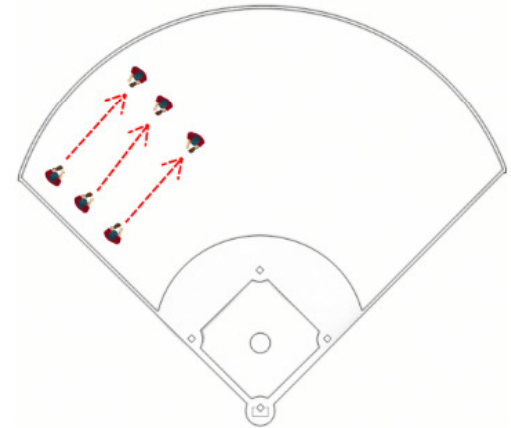
Group your outfielders into pairs and set them up, facing each other, around 60 feet apart. Both players are wearing their gloves, and standing in an athletic ready position. The feet should be slightly wider than shoulder width apart with the toes pointed toward your partner. One player in each pair has the ball.

Execution

In this throwing drill, the players will play catch while keeping their feet fixed in an isolated position. Removing the stride will help your fielders generate more power through their hips and torso, gain more arm extension on the release and follow through, and improve their throwing mechanics.

Coaching Tips

- The thrower should try to "feel" the ball releasing from his throwing hand, just as it passes below the glove side eye. (i.e. the left eye for a right handed player)
- Aim to hit your partner high in the chest with each throw



Outfielders - One Hop Throwing Drill

Setup

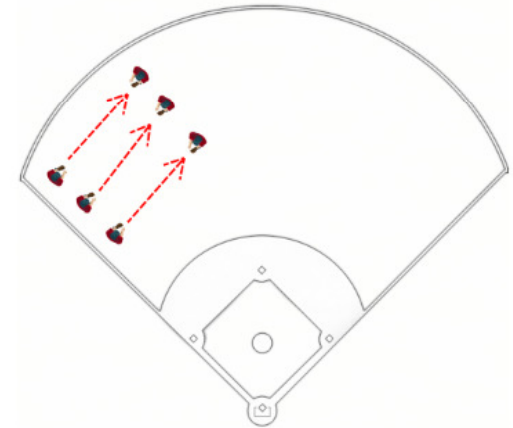
Group your outfielders into pairs and set them up, facing each other, around 60 feet apart. Both players are wearing their gloves, and standing in an athletic ready position. The feet should be slightly wider than shoulder width apart with the toes pointed toward your partner. One player in each pair has the ball.

Execution

Each pair will play catch, using one-hop throws instead of regular throws. Try to aim the one-hopper around one third of the distance between thrower and catcher. After a few successful one-hoppers, have the pairs alternate between one-hoppers and regular throws. The goal of this drill is not only to help your fielders practice fielding one-hop hits in the outfield, but also to improve your fielders throwing mechanics by helping them get "on top of the ball" through the release and follow through.

Coaching Tips

- Outfielders should always use a four-seam fastball grip when throwing the ball. The backspin generated will help the ball fly straight and true, and will also help one-hopped throws bounce harder off the ground and stay on target
- Get on top of the ball on the release to get a better one-hop angle



Pitchers - Pivot Foot Balance Drill

Setup

Line the pitchers up with about 4-6 feet between them, facing the coach. Each pitcher has a glove and ball.

Execution

The drill begins with the pitcher in his stance. On the coach's command, the pitcher will go into the Pivot stage of his delivery, taking a rocker step with the stride foot, and squaring off the pivot foot so it's parallel to the rubber.

Following the rocker step, the pitcher will bring his stride leg up in a controlled motion, transferring his weight from the stride leg to the pivot leg. The pitcher will then hold this position for a count of five, then lower the stride foot back down.

Coaching Tips

- The pitcher's weight should remain on the inside part of the pivot foot during the balance hold.
- Make sure the pivot foot stays still and planted. Don't allow it to shuffle around or move
- The stride foot toe should be loose and hanging down, slightly below the height of the stride foot heel
- The height of the stride knee is up to the pitcher. Experiment with different heights and see what feels most comfortable



HOLD BALANCE ON THE PIVOT FOOT

Pitchers - Stride Foot Balance Drill

Setup

Line the pitchers up with about 4-6 feet between them, facing the coach. Each pitcher has a glove and ball.

Execution

The drill begins with the pitcher in his stance. On the coach's command, the pitcher will go into the Pivot stage of his delivery, taking a rocker step with the stride foot, and squaring off the pivot foot so it's parallel to the rubber.

Following the rocker step, the pitcher will bring his stride leg up in a controlled motion, transferring his weight from the stride leg to the pivot leg. The pitcher will hold this position briefly, then separate his hands and stride toward home plate. Upon foot strike of the stride leg, the arms and body should form a "T" position, the glove hand forward and the throwing hand cocked back.

Simulate the release and follow through, bringing the pivot foot up off the ground and balancing on the stride foot only. Hold that position for a count of five.



HOLD BALANCE ON THE STRIDE FOOT

Pitchers - Pivot Foot Hop Drill

Setup

Line the pitchers up with about 4-6 feet between them, facing the coach. Each pitcher has a glove and ball.

Execution

The drill begins with the pitcher in his stance. On the coach's command, the pitcher will go into the Pivot stage of his delivery, taking a rocker step with the stride foot, and squaring off the pivot foot so it's parallel to the rubber.

Following the rocker step, the pitcher will bring his stride leg up in a controlled motion, transferring his weight from the stride leg to the pivot leg. He will then hop three times on the pivot foot only. After the three hops, he will freeze in the balance position, with the stride leg still up.

Coaching Tips

Each hop should be around 4-6 inches in length. Keep the weight on the inside of the pivot foot throughout for better balance.



HOP ON THE PIVOT FOOT

Pitchers - Stride Foot Hop Drill

Setup

Line the pitchers up with about 4-6 feet between them, facing the coach. Each pitcher has a glove and ball.

Execution

The drill begins with the pitcher in his stance. On the coach's command, the pitcher will go into the Pivot stage of his delivery, taking a rocker step with the stride foot, and squaring off the pivot foot so it's parallel to the rubber.

Following the rocker step, the pitcher will bring his stride leg up in a controlled motion, transferring his weight from the stride leg to the pivot leg. The pitcher will hold this position briefly, then separate his hands and stride toward home plate. Upon foot strike of the stride leg, the arms and body should form a "T" position, the glove hand forward and the throwing hand cocked back.

Simulate the release and follow through, bringing the pivot foot up off the ground and balancing on the stride foot only, then hop three times in a row. Finally, hold that position for a count of five.

Coaching Tips

Once your pitchers get the hang of this, combine the Pivot Foot Hop and Stride Foot Hop together into one drill. Go through the stance and pivot, raise the stride leg, then hop three times on the pivot foot. Continue into the stride, separation, release and follow through, then hop three more times on the stride foot.



HOP ON THE STRIDE FOOT

Pitchers - Eyes Closed Balance Drills

Setup

Line the pitchers up with about 4-6 feet between them, facing the coach. Each pitcher has a glove and ball.

Execution

This drill gives you a more challenging way to practice all the above balance drills once your pitchers master the basics. Complete each of the following drills with the eyes closed the entire time:

1. Pivot Foot Balance Drill
2. Stride Foot Balance Drill
3. Pivot Foot Hop Balance Drill
4. Stride Foot Hop Balance Drill

Coaching Tips

- To increase the difficulty of these balance drills even more, have the player balance on an uneven surface, like a folded towel, blanket, or pad

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YOUTH BASEBALL

SUCCESS SYSTEM

Game Situation Defenses

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Fielding Ground Balls

Before we get started with the game situation defense drills, let's review some basic fundamentals for fielding ground balls in the infield

- The infielder should begin in the ready position, with his feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart, knees bent and weight over the balls of the feet. His head should be facing home plate 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.
- To field the ball off the ground, the fielder's knees should be bent and the buttocks 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 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.
- 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.

Pitchers and First Basemen

Setup

Place a line of players at the pitcher's mound and a line of players behind first base. The coach stands at home plate with a fungo bat and balls. A catcher is in his stance behind the plate.

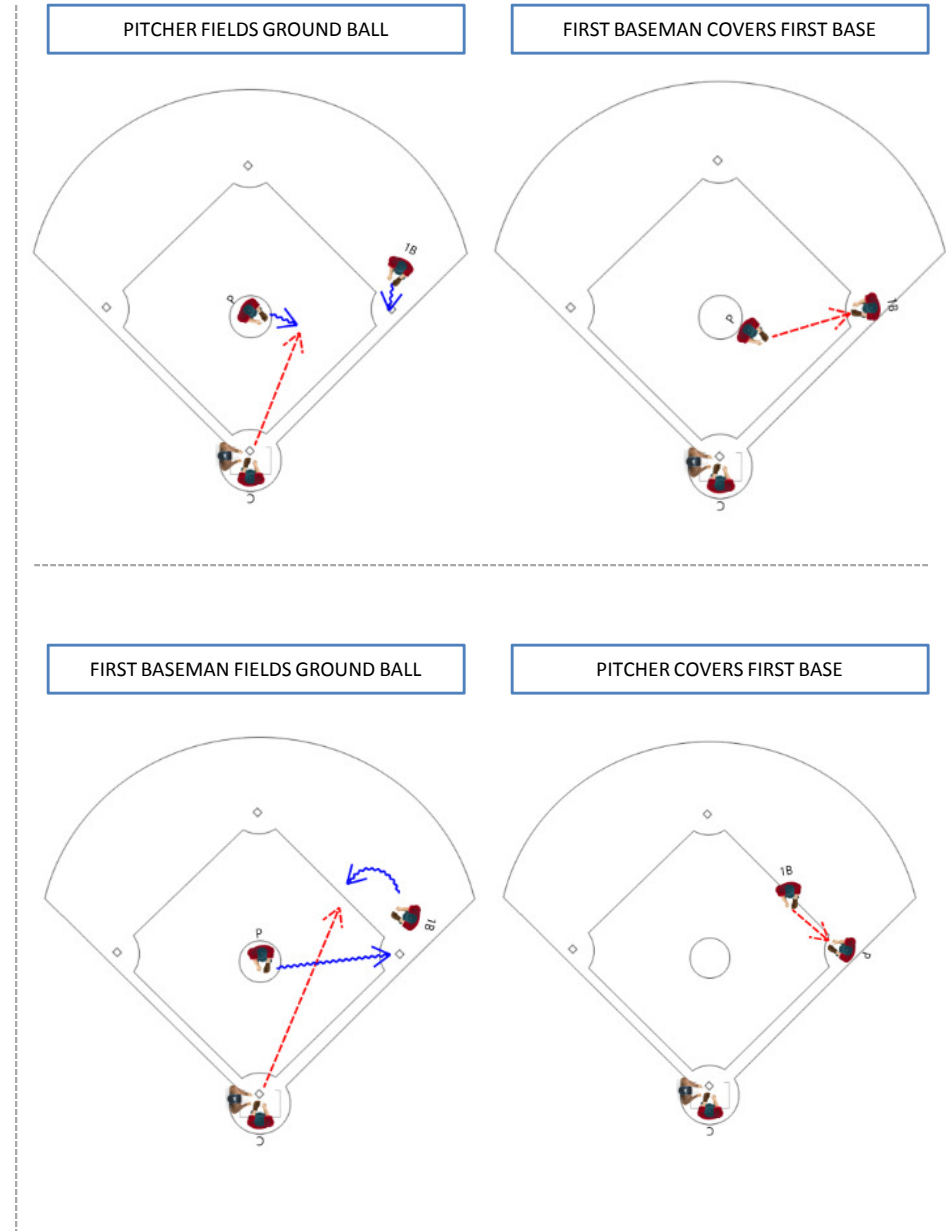
Execution

The first player in the pitcher's line will simulate throwing a pitch. The coach will then hit a slow ground ball to the area between the pitcher and first baseman.

If the pitcher fields the ball, the first baseman will cover first and the pitcher will make the throw to him. If the first baseman fields the ball, the pitcher will cover first. The players will rotate to the back of the line after each rep.

Coaching Tips

- The player who is fielding the ball should always call "Ball" loud and clear
- The player who is covering first base will call "Bag"
- Ball should always be called first, and Bag called second
- If the pitcher takes 3 steps and does not call Ball, the first baseman calls Ball
- The first baseman is the captain - he gets the final decision on who will play the ball
- The pitcher should always tag first base with his right foot and stay inside the baseline, to avoid colliding with the runner
- Use an underhand toss for short range throws
- If you have several multi-position players, have them switch lines after every player has had a turn, so they can run the drill from multiple positions



Pitchers, Second Basemen and First Basemen

Setup

Place a line of players at the pitcher's mound, a line of players playing second base, and a line of players playing first base. The coach stands at home plate with a fungo bat and balls. A catcher is in his stance behind the plate.

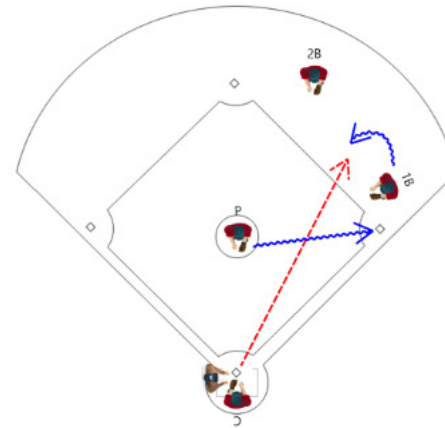
Execution

The first player in the pitcher's line will simulate throwing a pitch. The coach will then hit a slow ground ball to the area between first base and second base. Both the first baseman and second baseman will go after the ball, while the pitcher covers first.

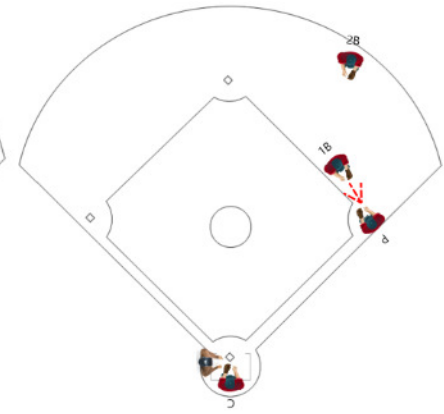
Coaching Tips

- The player who is fielding the ball should always call "Ball" loud and clear
- The player who is covering first base will call "Bag"
- Ball should always be called first, and Bag called second
- The first baseman should try to cover as much territory as he can, because the pitcher will know to cover first base for him.
- The second baseman will take any ball that is not called by the first baseman or pitcher
- The pitcher should always be prepared to cover first base on any ball hit to the right side of the infield. The first baseman will often be out of position, even if the second baseman ended up fielding the ball
- If you have several multi-position players, have them switch lines after every player has had a turn, so they can run the drill from multiple positions
- Emphasize the importance of communication and coverage for this drill
- The pitcher should always tag first base with his right foot and stay inside the baseline, to avoid colliding with the runner

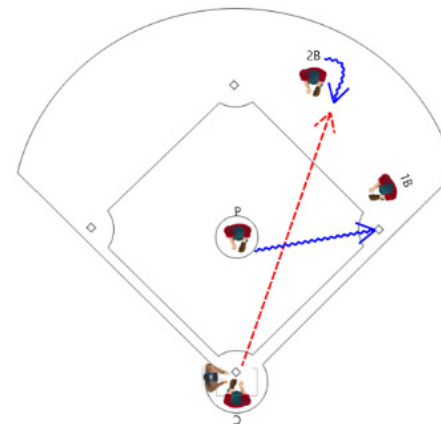
FIRST BASEMAN FIELDS BALL IN THE GAP



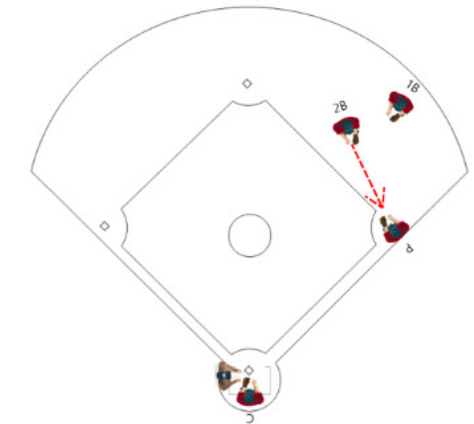
PITCHER COVERS FIRST BASE



SECOND BASEMAN FIELDS BALL IN THE GAP



PITCHER COVERS FIRST BASE



Pitchers, Shortstops and First Basemen - Double Play Ball

Setup

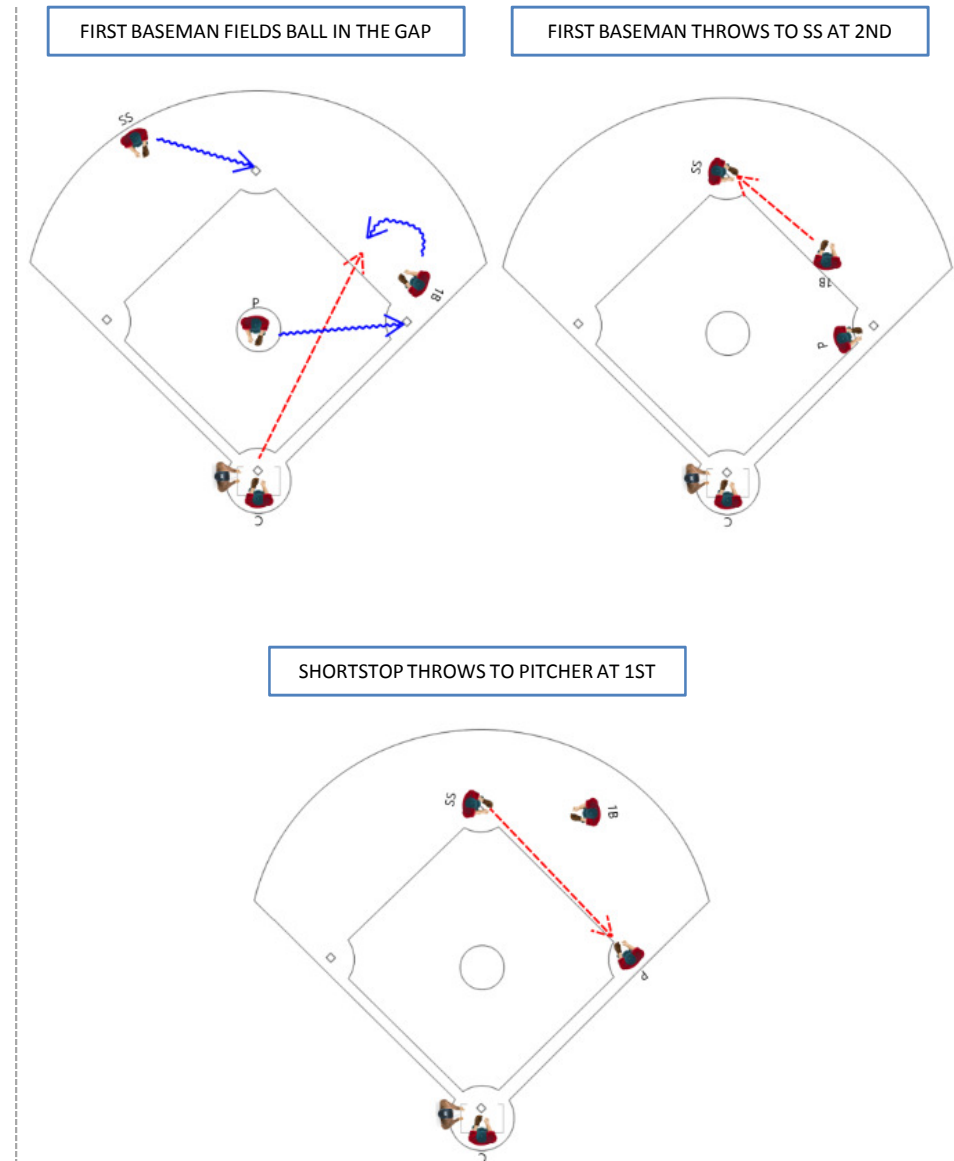
Place a line of players at the pitcher's mound, a line of players playing short stop, and a line of players playing first base. The coach stands at home plate with a fungo bat and balls. A catcher is in his stance behind the plate.

Execution

The first player in the pitcher's line will simulate throwing a pitch. The coach will then hit a slow ground ball to the first baseman. The shortstop will cover second base and receive the throw. He will then make the throw back to first base, where the pitcher is covering.

Coaching Tips

- The player who is fielding the ball should always call "Ball" loud and clear
- The player who is covering first base will call "Bag"
- Ball should always be called first, and Bag called second
- With a runner on first, against a right handed batter, the shortstop should set up around eight steps away from second base, and eight steps behind the baseline. Against a lefty, he can cheat around four steps toward second base.
- The first baseman should clear out of the infield after making his throw, to allow a clean line of sight from the shortstop to the first baseman
- When receiving the throw at second base, the shortstop should run hard to get within 3 feet of the bag, then break down to prepare to catch the ball while keeping his feet active and live. This will allow him to react to a bad throw without losing his balance or momentum
- After receiving the ball, the short stop should tag the bag with his throwing side foot (right foot for right handed players), and then step with his glove side foot in order to make the throw to first.
- The pitcher should always tag first base with his right foot and stay inside the baseline, to avoid colliding with the runner
- If you have several multi-position players, have them switch lines after every player has had a turn, so they can run the drill from multiple positions



Pitchers, Third Basemen, Catchers and First Basemen - Bunt Defense

Setup

Place a line of players at the pitcher's mound, a line of players playing third base, and a line of players playing first base. The coach stands at home plate with a fungo bat and balls. A catcher is in his stance behind the plate.

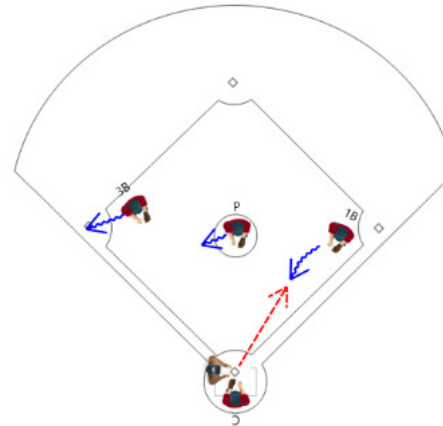
Execution

The first player in the pitcher's line will simulate throwing a pitch, then immediately break to the third baseline. The coach will then bunt to the right side or left side, and force the first baseman, pitcher, or third baseman to make a play, based on the rules below.

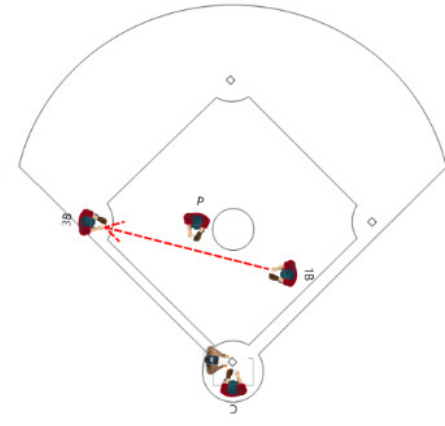
Coaching Tips

- The player who is fielding the ball should always call "Ball" loud and clear, ideally within the fielders first three steps after the bunter makes contact
- The player who is covering the base will call "Bag"
- Ball should always be called first, and Bag called second
- For simplicity, you can divide up the field into slices of pie
- The first baseman is responsible for the slice of pie from first base to the pitcher's mound, including any ball which is bunted directly up the middle. He will begin the play three steps off the bag and eight steps in. If he fields it, he will throw to third to get the advancing baserunner.
- The pitcher is responsible for the area from the mound to the third baseline. If the batter is showing bunt, the pitcher must be ready to break to the third baseline immediately after releasing the ball. If he fields it, he will throw to third base.
- The third basemen will begin the play four steps off the bag and two steps in, and only make a play on the ball if the pitcher is unable to (or does not call "Ball"). If he fields it, he will throw to first. If the pitcher fields it, he will return to the bag to make a play on the baserunner coming from second.
- If you have several multi-position players, have them switch lines after every player has had a turn, so they can run the drill from multiple positions

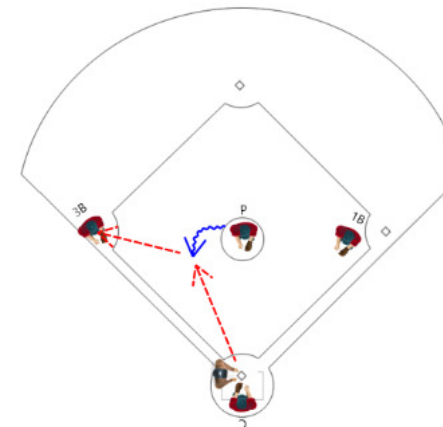
FIRST BASEMAN FIELDS THE BUNT



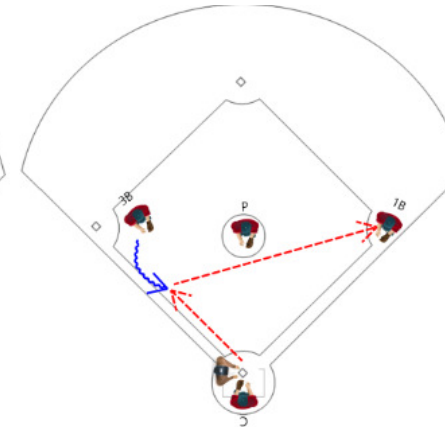
FIRST BASEMAN THROWS TO THIRD



PITCHER FIELDS AND THROWS TO 3RD



3RD BASEMAN FIELDS AND THROWS TO 1ST



Pitchers, Shortstops, Third Basemen, Outfielders - Pickoff Plays, Relays, and Backups

Setup

Place a line of players at the pitcher's mound, a line of players playing third base, a line of players playing shortstop, and players in each of the three outfield positions. The coach stands at home plate with a fungo bat and balls. A catcher is in his stance behind the plate.

Execution

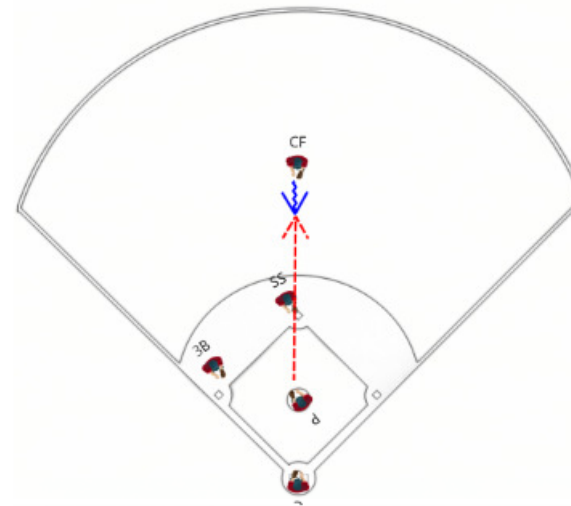
The first player in the pitcher's line will start by attempting a pickoff play to second base. He will intentionally throw it over the shortstop's head, so it sails into the outfield. Anticipating the play at third, the pitcher will immediately sprint to the area behind third base as a backup.

The shortstop will intentionally let the ball over his head to the center fielder, the move to the edge of the infield to assume the position of cutoff man. The center fielder will play the errant throw off the ground, then make a strong throw to third base, using the cutoff man if necessary.

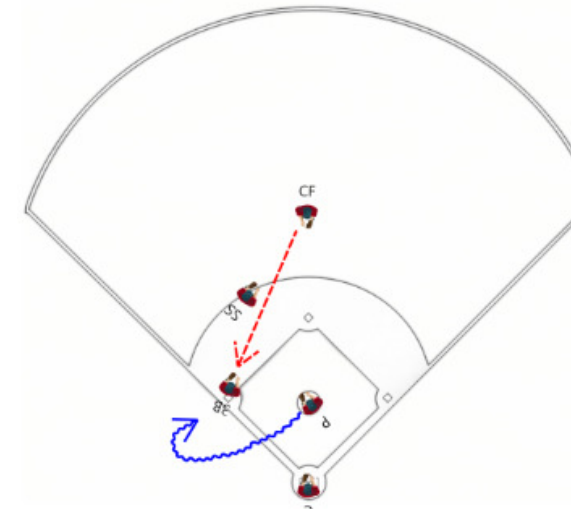
Coaching Tips

- The pitcher should use this as an opportunity to work on his pickoff move to second
- While playing backup, the pitcher should imagine a rope that connects the thrower and receiver of the ball, then extend that rope 10-15 feet behind the receiver to establish his backup position
- The pitcher will need to sprint hard to reach the backup position behind third. Make sure he is hustling with urgency.
- To play the ball in the outfield, the center fielder should charge the ball hard for the first 4 or 5 steps, then decrease his speed, get under control, and break down to field the ball.
- To field the ball, drop halfway down on the throwing side knee (the right knee for right handed players) and put the back of the glove flat on the ground between the legs.
- The outfielder should center his body in front of the ball, so he can block it with his torso if it takes a bad hop. Watch the ball into the glove, trap it with the throwing hand, then rise up and step into the throw. Use a crow-hop to get more momentum and power behind the throw into the infield.
- The third baseman will tell the shortstop whether to cut off the throw or let it through. If it's a good strong throw that's on target, he should let it through.
- If you have several multi-position players, have them switch lines after every player has had a turn, so they can run the drill from multiple positions

PITCHER OVERTHROWS PICKOFF MOVE. OUTFIELDER BACKS IT UP



OUTFIELDER THROWS TO 3RD WHILE PITCHER BACKS UP THROW



Pitchers and Catchers - Blocking Low Pitches

Setup

Place a line of players at the pitcher's mound, and have your catchers ready to rotate in and out of play at home plate.

Execution

The pitcher will intentionally throw balls into the dirt and force the catcher to get down and block them. Work with the catcher on his technique, with the goal of keeping every ball in front of him.

Coaching Tips

- Catchers must be in a stance that allows their first move to be down, rather than up when they begin to execute the block. The easiest way to accomplish this is to insure that their feet are far enough apart so their heel are in contact with the ground, toes are pointed up the baselines and their thighs are parallel to the ground.
- If they are in a deep crouch then their hips will have to go up before they can begin to move towards the ground. A deep crouch will only add to the amount of time it takes to block a ball by making the athlete travel upward before they are able to drive to the ground.
- Work on the following cues when teaching catchers to block balls in the dirt.
 1. Replace your feet with your knees in one, fluid motion: Drive your knees into the ground to where your feet were (about shoulder-width apart, with your upper body centered between them).
 2. Clear your feet: So that you can get to your knees easier, clear away your feet by sliding them out to the side of your body. Keep your shins on the ground and your toes pointed back and away from you to be in the best position to block the ball.
 3. Drop your mitt: As you see the ball approaching the dirt, drop your mitt between your legs. The web of your mitt should be in contact with the ground, and the palm of your glove should be squared towards the pitch. Your fingers will be below the ball.
 4. Tuck your arms: As you drop your glove, keep your throwing hand poised above the mitt or tight to your throwing-side. Your glove-side arm should be tight to your body, making a larger blocking area.
 5. Angle forward: Your upper body should be straightened and angled forward, over the ball. By doing this, you can knock down the ball and deflect it straight into the ground, rather than away from you.
 6. Keep your eyes down: Tuck your chin and always watch the ball.



Pitchers and Catchers - Communicating on Passed Balls and Wild Pitches

Setup

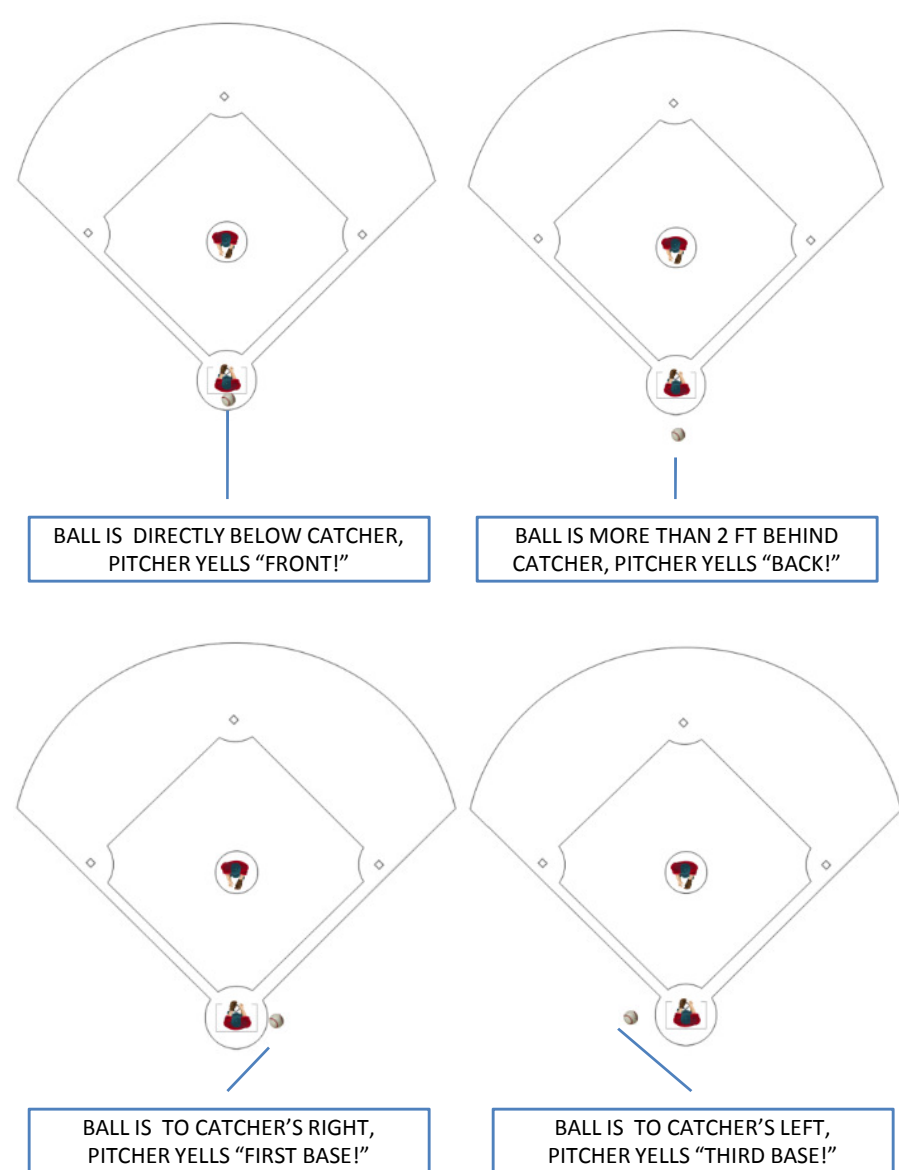
Place a line of players at the pitcher's mound, and have your catchers ready to rotate in and out of play at home plate.

Execution

The pitcher will intentionally throw balls into the dirt and force the catcher to get down and block them. When the ball comes loose, the pitcher should call out to the catcher to tell him where to find the ball.

Coaching Tips

- If the ball is directly below the catcher, or less than two feet behind him, the pitcher should shout "In Front! In Front." This allows the catcher to stand straight up or shuffle a step backwards in order to locate the ball.
- If the ball is more than two feet behind the catcher, the pitcher should shout "Back! Back!" This will require the catcher to turn around in order to locate the ball.
- If the ball has rolled to first base side of the infield, the pitcher will point to it and shout "First Base! First Base!"
- If the ball has rolled to third base side of the infield, the pitcher will point to it and shout "Third Base! Third Base!"
- The catcher should scoop the ball up with both the glove hand and bare hand, find his grip and be ready to make an accurate throw
- The pitcher should shout with urgency - this is a play where a split second of extra speed can stop a baserunner or prevent a run from scoring.



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Outfield Skills and Drills

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Stationary Throwing Drill

Setup

Group your outfielders into pairs and set them up, facing each other, around 60 feet apart. Both players are wearing their gloves, and standing in an athletic ready position.

The feet should be slightly wider than shoulder width apart with the toes pointed toward your partner. One player in each pair has the ball.

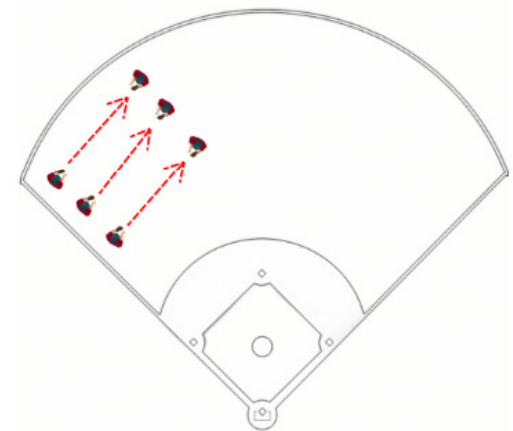
Execution

In this throwing drill, the players will play catch while keeping their feet fixed in an isolated position.

Removing the stride will help your fielders generate more power through their hips and torso, gain more arm extension on the release and follow through, and improve their throwing mechanics.

Coaching Tips

- Outfielders should always use a four-seam grip when throwing the ball. The backspin generated will help the ball fly straight and true, and will also help one-hopped throws bounce harder off the ground and stay on target



4 SEAM GRIP



One Hop Throwing Drill

Setup

Group your outfielders into pairs and set them up, facing each other, around 60 feet apart. Both players are wearing their gloves, and standing in an athletic ready position. The feet should be slightly wider than shoulder width apart with the toes pointed toward your partner. One player in each pair has the ball.

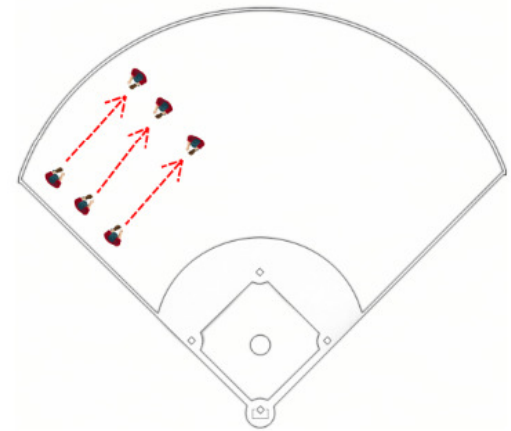
Execution

Each pair will play catch with the feet stationary (the same as the drill above), using one-hop throws instead of regular throws. Try to aim the one-hopper around one third of the distance between thrower and catcher. After a few successful one-hoppers, have the pairs alternate between one-hoppers and regular throws.

The goal of this drill is not only to help your fielders practice fielding one-hop hits in the outfield, but also to improve your fielders throwing mechanics by helping them get "on top of the ball" through the release and follow through.

Coaching Tips

- To get a better one-hop angle, extend the throwing arm as high as possible, and get on top of the ball through the release
- Finish with the throwing arm all the way through and all the way down, across the glove side knee
- After several throws with the feet stationary, allow the players to step with the glove side foot, then follow through by taking a two additional steps toward the target. This will help the drive the ball forward with more momentum, and get more power behind their throws.



Outfield Footwork Drill

Setup

The outfielders will line up single file in the outfield facing home plate. A coach stands at the edge of the infield with a glove and balls.

Execution

The coach will throw a soft fly ball to the first player in the outfielders line. The player will approach the fly ball under control then, using the proper footwork, catch the ball and immediately move into this throwing motion, delivering the ball back to the coach.

As your players get the hang of the footwork, you can move the coach to home plate and begin hitting fungos to the outfield instead of throwing the fly balls.

Coaching Tips

- Keep the feet moving with short choppy steps as the ball is in the air, which will make it easier to step with the correct foot as you catch.
- The proper footwork requires three steps in total to catch, grip, and throw the ball.
- **Step 1: CATCH:** Catch the ball with the glove side foot forward
- **Step 2: GRIP:** While you gather the ball into your throwing hand, take a second step with the throwing side foot.
- **Step 3: THROW:** As you go into your throwing motion, take a final step with the glove side foot and release the ball with your momentum going forward.
- For a right-handed fielder, the step sequence would go left-right-left
- The outfielder should watch the pitcher carefully, and time his movement with the pitcher's delivery.
- Take around 2.5 steps forward with each pitch, which will get the feet moving and enable to outfielder to get a better break on the ball
- Read the direction of the pitch and batter's swing - an inside pitch is more likely to be pulled while an outside pitch is more likely to be hit to the opposite field



Lead Drill

Setup

The outfielders will line up single file in center field, facing home plate. A coach stands at the edge of the infield with a fungo bat and balls. An additional coach or player stands next to the coach to receive throws from the outfield.

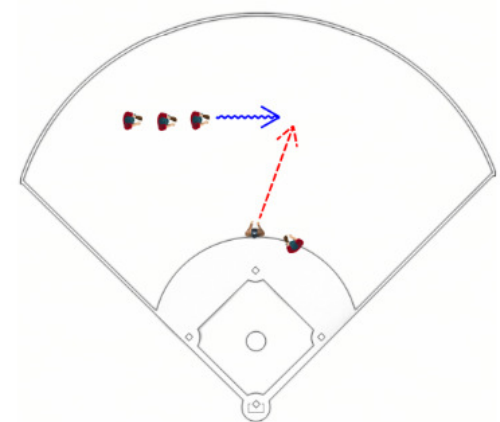
Execution

On the coaches signal, the outfielder will sprint from center field toward the right field fence. The coach will hit a line drive, ground ball, or fly ball in that direction, *leading* the fielder so that he has to sprint to make a play on the ball and stop it from reaching the fence.

He fields it cleanly then throws it into the infield. Complete several reps for each player going in each direction.



LEAD THE BALL OUT IN FRONT OF
THE RUNNING FIELDER



Turn to the Ball Drill

Setup

The outfielders will line up single file in center field, facing home plate. A coach stands at the edge of the infield with a fungo bat and balls. An additional coach or player stands next to the coach to receive throws from the outfield.

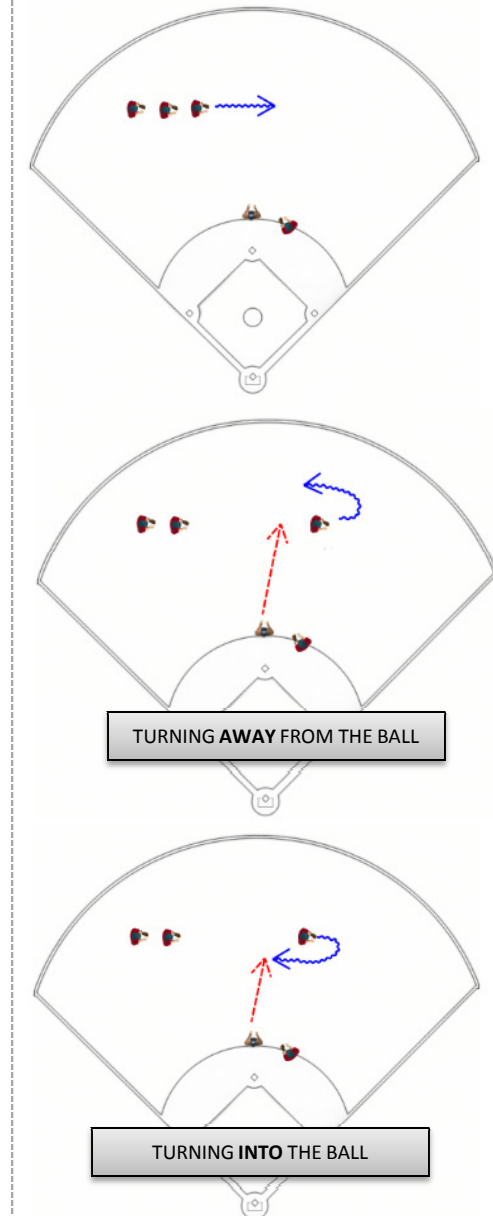
Execution

On the coaches signal, the outfielder will sprint from center field toward the right field fence. The coach will hit a line drive, ground ball, or fly ball behind the fielder, so he needs to change direction, turn to the ball and make a play.

He fields it cleanly then throws it into the infield. Complete several reps for each player going in each direction.

Coaching Tips

- This is a great drill for helping players adjust to a ball in mid-flight. In a real game, this situation could come about when an outfielder misreads a fly ball, it takes a bad hop in the grass, or is lost in the sun in mid-flight
- There are two ways of changing direction in this situation:
- Turning "**away**" from the ball, by making a front pivot. This requires the player to briefly turn his back to the ball in order to change direction, but may be faster and easier to perform for some players
- Turning "**into**" the ball, by making a reverse pivot to change direction. This allows the player to keep his eyes on the ball the entire time without turning his back to the infield



Look Over The Shoulder Drill

Setup

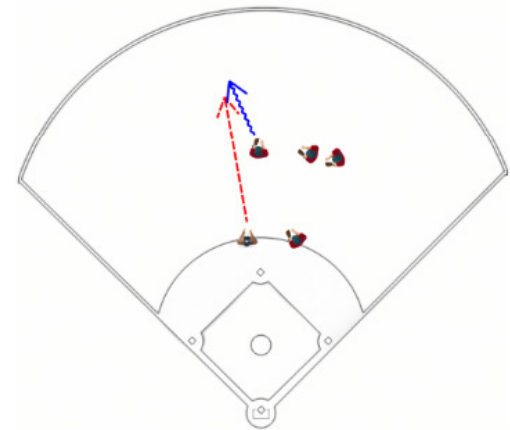
The outfielders will line up single file in center field. The first player in line faces toward the outfield fence and looks over his shoulder, back toward the infield. A coach stands at the edge of the infield with a fungo bat and balls. An additional coach or player stands next to the coach to receive throws from the outfield.

Execution

The coach will hit a high fly ball over the player's head. The player will keep his eye on the ball by keeping his head turned back toward the infield, then chase the ball over his head and try to make a play on it.

Coaching Tips

- Make sure your fielders have plenty of space to work with and you are not too close to the outfield fence, other groups of players, or any other obstructions.
- Make sure the field is clear of debris before you begin this drill.



Recovery Drill

Setup

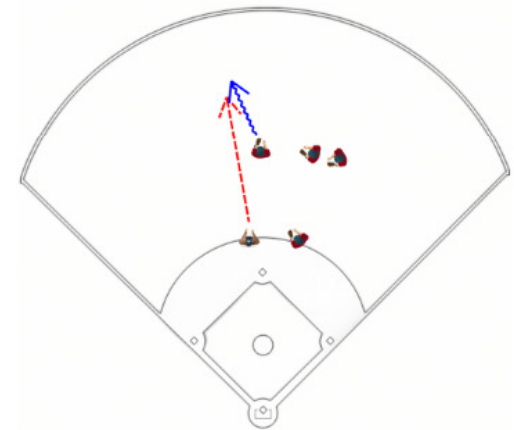
The outfielders will line up single file in center field. The first player sits, kneels, or lies flat on the ground, looking down at the grass. A coach stands at the edge of the infield with a fungo bat and balls. An additional coach or player stands next to the coach to receive throws from the outfield.

Execution

The coach will hit a high fly ball over the fielder's head. On the sound of contact, the player will need to look up, locate the ball, scramble to his feet and make a play.

Coaching Tips

- This drill will help players recover if they slip in the outfield and still need to make a play
- It's also a great confidence builder - if they can make this type of play then "regular" fly balls will seem very routine



Behind the Back Catch Drill

Setup

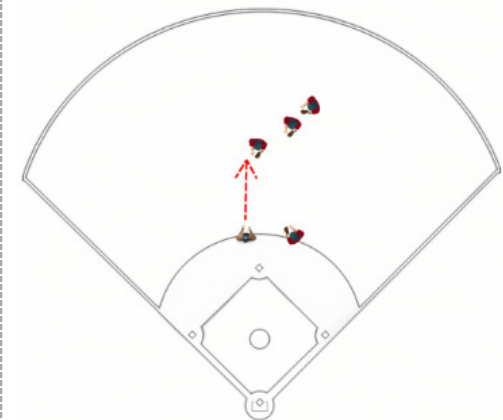
The outfielders will line up single file in center field. A coach stands at the edge of the infield with a fungo bat and balls. An additional coach or player stands next to the coach to receive throws from the outfield.

Execution

The goal here is to develop better footwork, concentration, and glove awareness by catching the ball behind the back. The coach will fungo or throw a soft fly ball to the first player in line, who will attempt to catch the ball with his glove behind his back.

Coaching Tips

- Try to catch the ball directly over the head, without turning sideways, which is much more difficult.
- Use soft baseballs or whiffle balls with younger children to prevent injury



Under the Leg Catch Drill

Setup

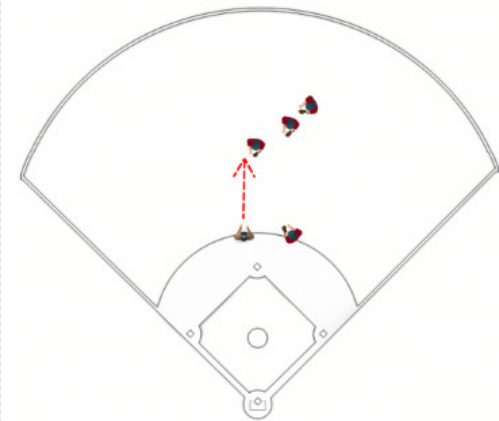
The outfielders will line up single file in center field. A coach stands at the edge of the infield with a fungo bat and balls. An additional coach or player stands next to the coach to receive throws from the outfield.

Execution

The goal here is to develop better footwork, concentration, and glove awareness by catching the ball under the fielder's leg. The coach will fungo or throw a soft fly ball to the first player in line, who will attempt to catch the ball with the glove placed between his legs. Do this by taking the glove hand around the back side the placing it forward between the knees.

Coaching Tips

- To make this catch more difficult, try to catch the ball with both feet flat on the ground (instead of lifting one leg up)
- Use soft baseballs or whiffle balls with younger children to prevent injury



Bent Leg Sliding Catch Drill

Setup

The outfielders will line up single file in center field with their shoes off. A coach stands at the edge of the infield with a fungo bat and balls. An additional coach or player stands next to the coach to receive throws from the outfield.

Execution

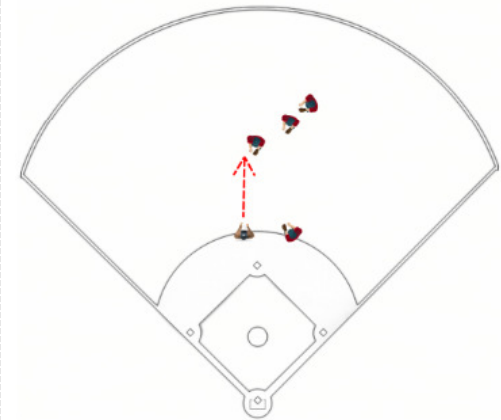
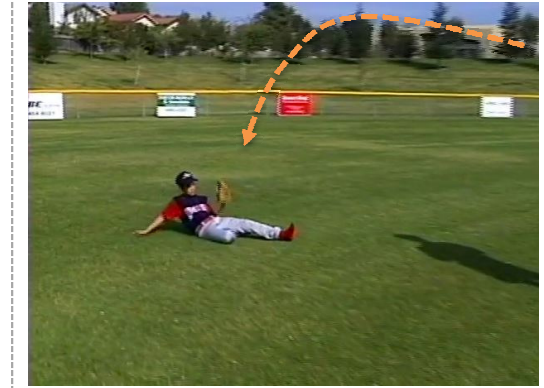
The coach will hit a short fly ball that requires the fielder to charge in at full speed in order to make a play. The bent leg slide in the field uses the same technique as a bent-leg slide in while baserunning.

As the player approaches the ball, he should begin to squat and shift his body weight down toward the grass.

With one leg straight and one leg bent, roll back the rear end, and sit on the grass with your momentum going forward. Bring the glove hand and bare hand up to make the catch.

Coaching Tips

- The bent leg slide is the safest technique for extending out to a ball at the edge of a fielder's range. It's much less risky than a headfirst dive and easier to teach as well
- This drill is performed with the shoes off to help players get comfortable with the technique without the risk of their cleats snagging on the grass
- The player should be sliding on his rear end, not his side
- The straight leg should have a slight bend in it and not be completely locked out. This will prevent it from "sticking" in the grass and prevent injury
- Make sure to practice this drill in the soft grass to start. Players can wear sliding shorts or an extra pair of sweat pants while they are learning the technique



Ground Ball Fielding Drill

Setup

The outfielders will line up single file in the outfield facing home plate. A coach stands at home plate with a fungo bat and balls. An additional coach or player stands to the side of home plate to receive throws from the fielders.

Execution

The coach will hit a ground ball to the first player in the outfielders line. The outfielder will charge hard at the ball, breakdown, field the ball using the Knee Method, Semi-Knee Method or Pro Method, then make an accurate throw back to home plate. The coach will then hit a ground ball to the next player, as the first player rotates to the back of the line.

Coaching Tips

- The **Knee Method** is typically taught to young players as the safest and most reliable way to field a ground ball in the outfield. You can also use this technique when there are no runners on base, when the ground is very bumpy, or when there is no chance of throwing a runner out.
- The outfielder should charge the ball hard for the first 4 or 5 steps, then decrease his speed, get under control, and break down to field the ball.
- To field the ball, drop to the throwing side knee (the right knee for right handed players) and put the back of the glove flat on the ground between the legs. Watch the ball into the glove, trap it with the throwing hand, then rise up and step into the throw.
- The outfielder should center his body in front of the ball, so he can block it with his torso if it takes a bad hop.
- The **Semi-Knee Method** is a faster, but slightly riskier way to field a outfield grounder. The technique is the same as the Knee Method, except the outfielder will only drop the throwing-side knee halfway to the ground while fielding the ball. This will allow him to move into his throwing motion more quickly, and have a better chance at throwing out a runner.
- The **Pro Method** (or Scoop Method) is the riskiest way to field an outfield grounder and should be used only in situations where the game will be lost if the fielder doesn't get the ball in quickly. This technique is for a do-or-die situation in which the tying or winning run is attempting to score and the outfielder must make a quick throw to the infield. The outfielder runs at the ball and scoops it up while on the move, placing the glove to the outside of the glove-side leg (instead of between the legs). If the ball is missed, it can run all the way to the fence, so use this technique with caution!



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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.

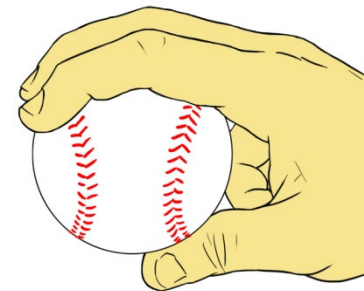
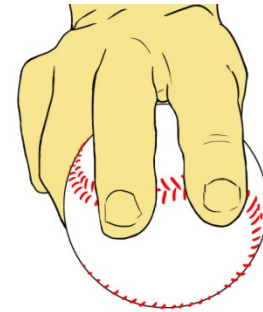
Have the players practice the grip with their eyes open, then with their eyes closed. Over time, they will develop a muscle memory and "feel" for the ball which will allow them to establish the proper four-seam grip in just a split second.

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.

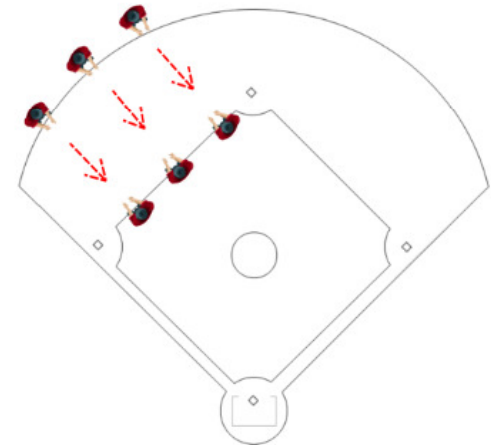
The fielder will then roll the ball back to his partner. Throw 10 balls to the middle, 10 to the right and 10 to the left.

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.

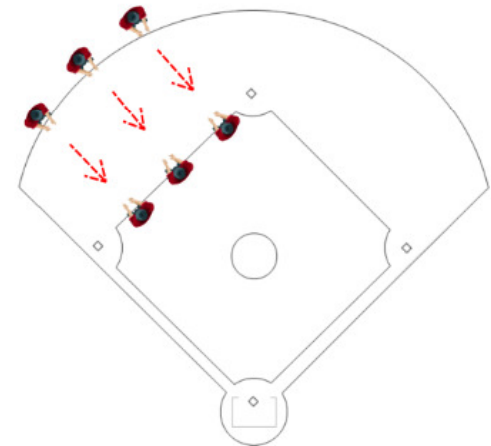
Execution

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.

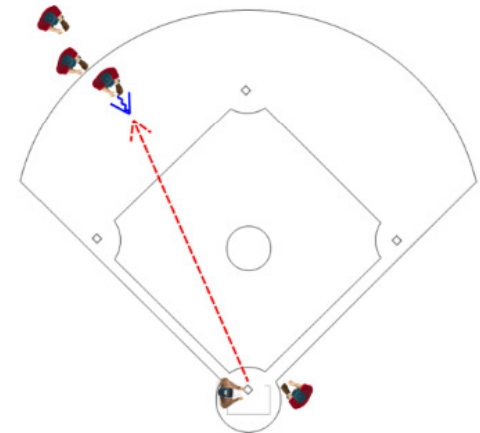
Execution

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.

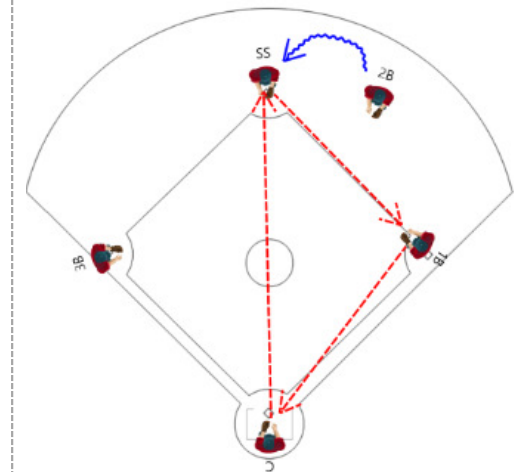
The sequence goes as follows:

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

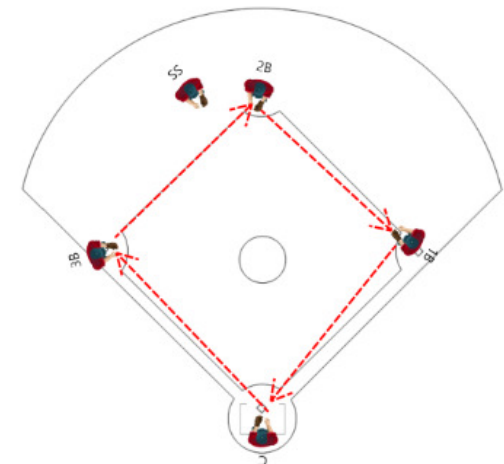
That makes one rotation. See if how many rotations your players can make in a fixed time limit (30 seconds to 1 minute) without making an error.

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

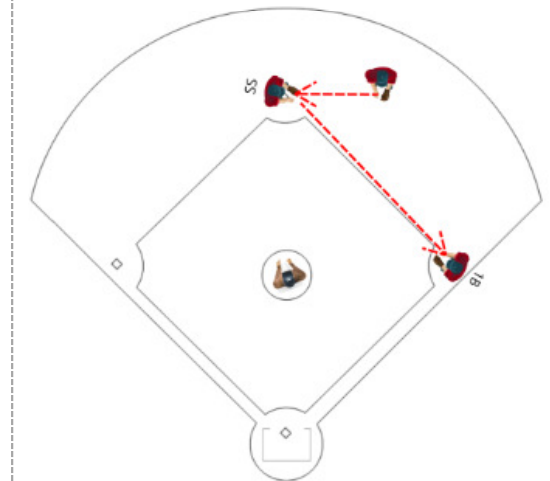
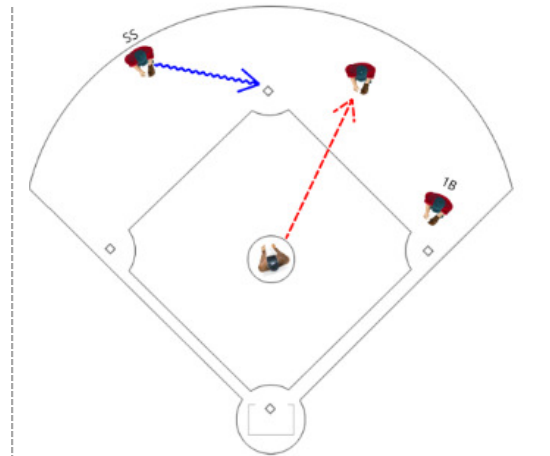
On the coach's signal, the players will drop down into ready position. He will then roll a ground ball to the second baseman, who will check his distance to the bag, then either tag second base himself or throw to the shortstop. After tagging second, the fielder will make the throw to first to complete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