

## **INFIELD FUNDAMENTALS (modified from multiple resources)**

Infield play is important to the success of any defense. The ability to field and throw accurately often is the difference in the game. Errors happen to everyone, but a solid infield that makes few errors and can make some difficult plays puts their team in a position to win. To become a great infielder you must possess athletic ability and quickness, AND have a strong work ethic and the desire to continually improve. Think about all the types of plays you have an opportunity to make or not make during the season. You have to move in all directions and field balls hit at various speeds and degrees of difficulty.

Every infielder must strive to achieve the following:

1. The correct attitude
2. Excellent sensory perception
3. Good rhythm with all ground balls
4. Proper mechanics
5. The ability to make the plays

**Every infielder must desire to be involved in all 21 outs.** The ATTITUDE should be to want every ground ball be hit to them. The fielder is so confident in their fielding abilities that they know every ground ball hit to them will result in an out. Therefore, if 21 ground balls are hit to them, no errors will be committed, and their team will be in a great position to win. The fielder's confident attitude forces them to believe that there is no ground ball which can get by them, that they will get to the ball and throw the runner out.

This is a highly competitive attitude, which puts the infielder in the correct frame of mind. Never should an infielder take on the attitude of fear or apprehension; rather, they should have an attitude of confidence and courage.

**The jump an infielder gets on a batted ball is directly proportional to their level of SENSORY PERCEPTION.** A good infielder will read a batted ball with both sight and sound. This ability enables the infielder to gauge the speed and direction of the batted ball.

Most infielders will move, even on balls that are swung on and missed. This is due to their visual perception of pitch location and bat angle. The sound of the ball coming off the bat allows the infielder to make judgment of how fast or slow the ball may be hit and then react accordingly.

In order to take full advantage of both sight and sound, an infielder must have a solid pre-pitch mentality and be focused on the hitting zone. Infielders must practice this during batting practice to get the full effect of using both sight and sound.

**Developing a good RHYTHM WITH GROUND BALLS.** Arriving in the proper position to field a ground ball requires a sense of timing. The term "arriving on time" is a good picture of what actually needs to occur.

There are three different hops which an infielder might field; long hop, short hop, and in-between hop. The most desirable hops to field are long hops or short hops with in-between hops being the one most likely to be misplayed.

Although sensory perception plays a large role in the rhythm phase, once the speed of the ground ball has been gauged, agility and timing must take over. This allows the infielder to get to and field the more desirable hops. An infielder accomplishes this by slowing down (shuffling the feet) or speeding up (taking a more direct approach to the ball). Once the fielder has arrived, with good timing, they will field and secure the ball.

**Proper FIELDING MECHANICS** must take place throughout the entire fielding process. The major points of the fielding process include:

1. Ready position
2. Check step
3. Getting outside of the ball
4. Right-left field (for a right-handed fielder)
5. Go down and get the ball, with the hands at 7 & 2 o'clock
6. Right-left throw (for a right-handed fielder)

The methods infielders use to approach and address the ball may be different. However, the infielder must have good feet and good hands or their fielding will be based on luck. Fielding mechanics are taught in many different ways, but a good infielder always finds a way to get into a good athletic position to field the ball.

**The bottom line for any infielder is to get to the ball and MAKE THE PLAY.** The fielder must relax, feel confident, and explode. There is no time in a game to think back on the how-to's of fielding. The infielder should react only to the situation and conquer it. This moment is the time all the hard work in practice pays off. All the thinking, repetition, and focus should take over and allow the infielder to accomplish only one thing, MAKING THE PLAY!

Softball is a repetitious sport, and a good work ethic and practice regimen are the only ways to become truly proficient in these areas. Every infielder must take pride in their craft. Becoming proficient in these areas will allow them to further their mental and physical abilities.

## **READY POSITION**

When you get in the ready position, you need to be ready to field AND ready to move. Many players forget the second part (ready to move). They crouch down with their feet very wide, their gloves almost on the ground, and their palms facing the hitter. When the ball comes, these players probably look like they're holding a skillet rather than a glove.

Just as a hitter needs to stay relaxed to be quick, the same also applies to an infielder. The ready position described above creates a couple of problems for the fielder.

1. It's not very comfortable to be that low, which can cause tension, not only in the legs, but in the arms and hands as well.
2. It's not the best position to be ready to move. You're certainly not going to stay that low as you go after a hard ground ball hit 15 feet to your right.

The ready position is an athletic position that allows you to move quickly in any direction.

1. Bend your knees and hips comfortably;
2. Place your feet a little wider than shoulder width apart;
3. Put your weight on the inside balls of your feet so you can push off in either direction easily;
4. Place your arms out in front of your body but comfortable and not too far away;
5. Extend your hands naturally; while you don't want the back of your glove facing the pitcher, you also don't need to have it completely open and facing the hitter. Many players have their palms facing each other at the ball crosses the plate.
6. Pelvis tilted posteriorly.
7. Head up and eyes on the batter.

## **PRE-PITCH ROUTINE**

Most players devise a pre-pitch routine that puts them in the ready position as the ball crosses the plate. This may be a shuffle of the feet or a little hop. Whatever method you use, make sure you're balanced, comfortable, and ready to move. Get your momentum moving forward. Don't sit back on your heels. You want to be aggressive and play the ball rather than have the ball play you. This can only be done if you're moving forward and ready.

## **GROUND BALL HIT AT YOU**

Get in the habit of moving toward the grounder as you prepare to field it. Notice the word 'charge' wasn't used -- that word implies running towards it as fast as you can. Unless it's a slow roller, you want to approach the ball in a controlled manner that is aggressive but not out of control. This allows you to make adjustments so you're not catching it off a short hop or taking it off the first bounce on the infield dirt. As you get closer to the ball, begin breaking down to get into position to field the ball. To do this, shorten your steps and widen your feet. Bend not only at the knees but also with your back. Put your hands out in front of your body and open your glove toward the ball with your bare hand on top.

## **FIELDING THE GROUND BALL**

There are a few common problems that players make when catching a ground ball.

1. Not catching the ball out in front - By doing this, you cannot watch the ball all the way into your glove; most likely you are bending either with your knees or back but not both. When you catch the ball under you, you lose the ability to give with your hands. You want 'soft hands', a term used to describe a fielder who catches the ball out front of their body and seems to suck up the ball from that position into a position to throw. With soft hands, you can make last second adjustments to a bounce that was different than expected.
2. Poorly Positioned Hands - Your glove must be in a good position to field the ball: open and close to vertical. This gives you the most area to catch the ball.

## **SHORT HOP**

In most situations, try to avoid catching the ball on a short hop; however, sometimes the short hop is the best spot to catch a ball. This is true for a ball chopped high into the ground or a line drive that you can't quite get as it's coming down. This is a difficult play to make and taking the ball on a short hop on the way in is a much better option. The big difference when fielding the ball on a short hop over a normal ground ball is that instead of giving with the ball, you actually want to be moving your glove forward as you catch it.

## **BACKHAND**

The backhand play is one of the most difficult to make. Poor technique and lack of practice are two of the biggest reasons why players struggle with the backhand play.

As you approach the ball you will either field it with your left foot forward or right foot forward depending on when you get to it. Many players will practice fielding a backhand only one way, but the fact is you will have to make the play both ways so make sure you practice both ways of fielding a backhand. Either way you want to make sure you keep your glove in front of your face.

## **Glove Use**

- Pocket - The pocket is used when catching fly balls, making tag plays, and on all plays where you must extend fully to make the play.
- Palm - The palm is used on all *Double Plays* and all relays from the outfield.
- The "V" - The "V" is used on all routine plays.
- Glove break in – pocket is open / biggest pocket
- How to wear glove – heel of hand out of glove for flexible hands

## **Ready/Setup Position**

- 2 methods – R/L/Hop or Tennis Feet – start when pitcher starts- prefer tennis feet
- must be ready to move when the ball enters the hitting zone
- elbows must be in and relaxed (glove at 6-7 o'clock; relaxed wrist/softer hands)
- glove presented to hitter (open)
- middle infielders slightly higher than corners – must be able to move ALL 4 directions
- pivot and cross over step

## **Infield Throwing Mechanics and Teaching Principles**

1. Must have body in "Get On Skateboard" position
2. Feet must keep moving and should never be dead
3. Arm action is shorter than OF and P
4. Pull ball out of the side of the glove and never allow the ball below the waist
5. Teaching cue is to keep the thumb underneath the ball – backspin and mechanics
6. **Down- Out- Up- In-** principle will put player in proper throwing position  
**Hands will separate at midline of body with feet moving to target**
7. Follow through is to keep eyes/nose on target until the ball is caught and the body is moving to target after release.
8. Throwing on the run,  $\frac{3}{4}$  arm action, back of target (play tail of ball), MUST keep fingers on top of ball and thumb underneath ball

## **Fielding Groundballs**

Each different type of groundball will listed below with the proper mechanics for each type of ball. The teaching cues we will use are; **ball - glove - eye**. Other key phrases are; chin down, out front, balance, create an angle, separate hands early to quicken feet (pull hands to midline of body to throwing position). These teachings are taught by using **down-out-up -in**. We will focus on 5 types of groundballs.

1. **At Fielder**
2. **Forehand**
3. **V-Cut**
4. **Backhand**
5. **Slow Roller**

## At Fielder

Our goal is to field this ball 100% of the time. This is the hardest ball to field due to tendency to freeze, judge the hop, tendency to stand up, and judge the speed of the ball.

- The good infielder works to field the hop he wants.
  - Top of hop
  - Down hop
  - Short hop
  - We avoid the up hop or in-between hop
  
- Approach
  - create angle and field ball as close to hitter as possible
  - the ball needs to be fielded on the glove side of the body in front of eye
  - finish with R/L field (right foot in front of left foot to step in front)
  - read ball off the bat to determine how to charge
    - down angle go hard and controlled
  
- Fielding Position
  - Lower Body
    1. feet – toe-instep alignment (throw side in front of field side)
    2. feet wider than shoulders
    3. knees slightly bent (flexed)
    4. knees inside feet
  - Upper Body
    1. chin down / bill of hat down
    2. hands out front; field ball in front of hat (open glove with fingers - 6-7 o'clock)
    3. hands will make jaws to field ball
    4. field the ball on glove side of body
    5. elbows must be in and slightly bent
    6. back parallel to ground
  
- the glove stays at knee level or lower
- the glove should always be fingers down; fingers on ground and not the back of glove
- separate hands by pulling ball out of side of glove and keep feet moving
- to get to a proper throwing position, throwing side foot will step inside of glove foot
  - this will put the fielder in a more balanced position, closes front side, & puts fielder closer to target

## Progression

1. stance
2. move forward – ready position to approach
3. move forward to field the ball – no ball
4. move forward to field the ball – stationary ball
5. move forward to field the ball – rolled ball with partner short distance
6. move forward to field the ball – rolled ball with partner long distance
7. fungoes hit right at fielder – reinforce correct and poor fundamentals
8. live fungoes

## Teaching Cues

**Get on Skateboard**  
**Down-Out-Up-In**  
**Palm On Ball (6-7 o'clock)**  
**Nose to Leather**  
**Follow Throw**

body position  
to get into proper throw position, moving through ball / to target  
relaxes wrist and keeps the palm on the ball  
watch the throw all the way to target  
follow ball to the target with the eyes and body

### Forehand

- stay low and lead with glove - glove must be out front, open, and at knee level when moving
- crossover step with throwing side foot must be in front of body
- gauge the quickest angle to the ball to get the best hop
- get to fielding location and setup to field ball (goal is to beat ball to spot)
- need to get body lined up to throw
  - close front side - glove side shoulder and hip point to target
  - tell fielder to get on skateboard
  - keep hand on top of ball
  - Nose-to-Leather

### Progression

1. Cross-over steps - staying low - glove open
2. Cross-over steps to field - no ball
3. Cross-over steps to field - stationary ball
4. Cross-over steps to field - throw - rolled ball
5. Fungoes
6. Live fungoes

### V-Cut

- used when a slower hit ball is hit to backhand side of body
- crossover step and stay low
- this play takes the backhand out that leads with the right foot
- anticipate where you can meet the ball and hustle to that position in a straight line and plant firmly with your right leg
- ball is fielded with glove shoulder pointing to target
- once fielded the feet will 'get on skateboard' for throw; step in front
- the throw must be quick as it will be a close play - throw over the top and drive the back leg
- field ball at midline of body - field the ball with the same principles as if it were hit right at you

### Key Principles

1. You always field the ball that is hit to the backhand side in front of the body if you can.
2. The "V" cut gives you an advantage over rounding the ball off.
  - This is a more aggressive approach
  - You can field the ball one hop earlier and closer to the target

### Progression

1. Cross-over steps in a straight line to meet an imaginary ball – field, gather, and throw - no ball
2. Cross-over steps - field - stationary ball
3. Cross-over steps - field - throw - stationary ball
4. Cross-over steps - field - throw - rolled ball
5. Fungoes
6. Live fungoes

## Backhand

- stay low
- use a crossover step with glove side foot
- Reverse the glove and open the palm fully
- Keep the glove knee level or below
- Stay low and bend at both knees and the waist
- Open the glove fully by turning the elbow up and out and spread the palm of the hand to widen glove
- Field the ball 6-12 inches in front of the glove hand foot (reach for ball)
- field the ball at the base of the web (thumb and first finger pinch)
- Move the glove slightly into the ball
  - The ball stays in the glove better
  - It breaks the momentum and allows you to start to square your shoulders toward your target
  - The exception is the hard hit short hop because you have plenty of time
- swiping the glove into the ball you can take your chin to the target and point your shoulder to the target quicker
- Stay low and plant throwing hand leg hard on the inside of the foot
- Step toward the target and open your hips
- Throw with a high elbow across the seams if possible. Then follow your throw

## Progression

1. Cross-over steps - stay low - reverse the glove
2. Cross-over steps - field - no ball
3. Cross-over steps - field - stationary ball
4. Cross-over steps - field - throw - stationary ball
5. Cross-over steps - field - throw - rolled ball
6. Fungoes
7. Live fungoes

## Slow Rollers

- must be aggressive on this play
- stay low and approach with palm of glove open
- glove stays lower than the knees
- bend at both the knees and waist as approach is closer to the ball
- make slight round of ball (slight banana)
- field the ball 10-18 inches in front of glove side heel of foot (easier play is 1 hand, but prefer 2)
- push the ball against the glove to get a proper grip when using 2 hands
- steps are not important, player needs to throw when balanced and off of throwing side
- point head and belt buckle to face target
- if body is going in different direction as target, throw to backside of target so ball will tail to target
- after throwing the ball, continue in same direction to avoid cutting off momentum

## Progression

1. Step by step movements without the ball
2. Step by step movements with a stationary ball
3. Step by step movements with a rolled ball
4. Step by step movements with a rolled ball and throw into a screen
5. Step by step movements with a rolled ball and throw to a partner
6. Step by step movements with a rolled ball and throw to different bases from different angles / distances
7. Fungoes
8. Live fungoes

## FIRST BASE

### RECEIVING THE THROW

When catching the ball from infielders the first baseman should get to the bag as quickly as possible. Once there, turn and face the direction the ball is coming from. Make sure you do not stand directly on the bag. Keep both feet on the bag; this allows you to reach out with either foot depending on which side the ball comes to you on, while the other foot stays in contact with the base.

#### EXAMPLE: BALL COMING FROM THE SHORTSTOP

If the shortstop throws the ball directly at you or to your glove hand side, step out with your left foot (for a right-handed first baseman) in the direction of where you want to catch the ball. So, if the ball was thrown a few feet on the infield side of first, you may need to step towards home (not directly down the line) to make the catch.

On a ball thrown to your throwing hand side, step out with your other foot to give you the maximum range to catch the ball.

A common mistake made by young players is to step out to receive the ball prior to the ball being thrown. You have plenty of time to stretch out for the ball after it's in the air.

### BALLS IN THE DIRT

It would be great if you always received the ball chest high from the other fielders on a throw to first. Unfortunately there are many times when the ball hits the dirt before it hits your glove. As a first baseman, this play has the greatest impact on how coaches, teammates, and fans judge your defensive ability. While you won't have an error under your name if you can't come up with the ball in the dirt, it still reflects on your ability. Although you won't field all these "dirt" balls cleanly, it is a skill you should master to the best of your ability.

#### TO SHORT HOP *or* NOT TO SHORT HOP

An infielder adjusts as they approach a ground ball to catch it, either as it's coming down or on a short hop; as a first baseman, you need to do the same and keep in contact with first base. As the ball comes toward you, quickly determine where it will hit the dirt. If you can, stretch out toward the ball or stride out at an angle that puts your glove in a position to catch the ball on the short hop. As the ball hits the dirt, move your glove forward and at a downward angle toward the ball. This allows you to catch the ball right after it hits the ground and most importantly keep it in your glove. When catching the ball on a short hop, you don't want to stretch out and then have your glove give or have it angled back. This most likely will result in the ball bouncing off your glove.

If you cannot stretch out in order to catch the ball on a short hop, then modify your approach.



## **SECOND BASE**

### **DOUBLE PLAYS**

#### **BALL HIT DIRECTLY AT YOU**

When the ball is hit at you, you will want field the ball with your right foot slightly behind your left. This will allow you to easily pivot and throw because your hips will already be slightly open.

Once you have fielded the ball cleanly, you have two options for delivering the ball to the shortstop:

- With the first option, you will rotate your hips open toward second base as you bring the ball up from your glove. Your feet will stay planted and you will deliver the ball using your elbow and wrist to provide the power. This is a different feel from the normal circular motion you use for most throws, but it will allow you to deliver the ball quickly to the shortstop.
- The other option is rotate your hips open toward second, dropping your left knee to the ground in the direction of second and throwing from your knee. You may find this method easier if you don't have a strong arm or it's a longer throw, since it allows you to rotate your shoulders and get more of your upper body into the throw. It will probably take you longer to deliver the ball using this method, but if you can make a more accurate throw to the shortstop then it's worth the extra time.

#### **BALL HIT TO YOUR RIGHT**

On this play you will normally be close enough to underhand the ball to the shortstop. Since you are going to your right, you should naturally be in a position where your right foot is slightly behind your left. This is the position you want to be in. Once you have fielded the ball, you will pivot on your right foot, clear your glove (this will give the shortstop a clear view of the ball), and deliver the ball. When tossing the ball underhanded you want to keep your wrist stiff, your arm motion will provide the power behind the toss. As your arm makes the underhand throwing motion, you will want to follow your throw with your left leg. This will help you deliver an accurate throw to second.

With both of the plays described above, they should be performed from the crouching position. You don't want to catch the ball, stand up, and then rotate and underhand it. Simply field the ball, rotate from that position and deliver the ball.

#### **BALL HIT TO YOUR LEFT**

(ASSUMING YOU ARE FIELDING IT ON YOUR GLOVEHAND SIDE)

On this ball that takes you away from where you are going to throw the ball, you will want to field the ball, plant your right foot, pivot to your left and throw the ball to second. It's important that you don't whirl and throw blindly back to second. After you have planted your right foot, turn your head and pick up your target prior to throwing the ball. If you have any doubt about having enough time to get the runner at second, just throw the ball to first and get the sure out. A wild throw that pulls the shortstop off of second and results in not getting an out, means you were rushing the play and probably should have just made the out at first. Physical errors will happen, but sometimes they are the direct result of a poor decision.

#### **BALL HIT TO THE THIRD BASEMAN OR SHORTSTOP**

With the ball hit to the left-hand side of the infield, you will most likely be the pivot person at second base. The only exception is when the shortstop is close enough to make the play unassisted. There are a number of ways for you to receive the ball and make the throw to first. Which method you use will be determined by the location of the throw and your position around the bag when the ball is on its way.

### **STRADDLE**

One method is to straddle second base. You can use this method when you have gotten to the base quickly and the throw is on target. Position your feet on each side of second base and as you catch the ball you will take a short step with your left foot and throw to first. When using this method you are never really touching the base. Most umpires will not be in a position to notice and even if they did they most likely wouldn't call it. If you are concerned, get in a habit of dragging your right foot over the bag as you follow through with your throw.

The other problem with the straddle method is that it puts you in a vulnerable position as you are waiting for the ball. If the fielder drops the ball or has some other problem and you forget to move, you are exposed to taking a cleat in the side of your.

## **LEFT FOOT**

Another method is to use your left foot on second base. This method will allow you to go in any direction and get a good quick throw off. As you approach second base, breakdown your steps a few feet from the bag. This will allow you to time the actual step on second with your left foot and determine how you're going to move off that foot.

There are a number of ways you can turn the double play from your left foot. Again, the location of the throw and when you arrive at second will determine what method you will use.

- You're at second early, throw is on target. Normally this will occur when the throw is coming from the third baseman. In this case you will plant your left foot on second and step across the bag catching the ball as your right foot lands. From there it's just a step towards first with your left leg and a throw.
- You're at second early, throw is to your right. This throw is going to take you behind second base and by using your left foot on the bag, this is an easy play. You will plant your left foot and push off on to your right foot behind the bag while catching the ball. From there just take a small step with your left leg and throw the ball to first.
- You're at second in normal time, throw is on target. On this play you're not at the base early enough to cross over and make the throw, so you will want to use your left leg to push you back off the base where you will plant your right leg, step and throw. At first you might think this would be a slow way to turn a double play and that you would just want to use your right leg on the base and just step and throw. The key here is the timing. If you are on the base before you catch the ball, you can actually be pushing back with your left leg and planting with your right as you catch the ball. This will result in a very quick throw.
- You're at second in normal time, throw is to your right. In this case you may need to go get the ball prior to touching the bag with your left foot. Try to catch the ball so that you're behind second in a direct line with first base. This will allow you to catch the ball and as you step to throw you will step on second base with your left foot. The key with this play is being aware of where the runner is. If you have a fast runner at first, you may be allowing them to slide into second safely as you go get the ball. Sometimes you have to abandon the double play and just get the out.

## **RIGHT FOOT**

You will use your right foot on the bag when either the throw is to the left of the bag or you're late getting to the bag and the ball arrives before you. In the second case you will catch the ball on your way to second and when you get there you will step on the bag with your right foot, step toward first with your left and throw.

## **LOW THROW**

Occasionally the feed will be very low or in the dirt. This is a difficult ball to turn two on. Come across second base and try to catch the ball in front of the base. You will be acting more like a first baseman with this type of throw. In this situation you want to make sure you get the out at second.

## **AVOIDING THE RUNNER**

With all the throws you make to first you have to always be aware of avoiding the runner that is coming at you. The first key to avoiding injury is to always point your left toe toward first when you make the throw. This will point your kneecap in the direction of the runner which is a less vulnerable position than having the side of your leg exposed.

The best method to avoid the runner sliding into second base is to hop on your left leg after making the throw and jumping over the oncoming runner. You'll often see second basemen that practice this hop whenever they practice turning the double play. Having confidence in your ability to get out of the way of a sliding runner will add to your confidence in turning a double play.

## **THIRD BASE**

As a third baseman, you won't need the quickness of a shortstop or a second baseman, but you must have quick reflexes. The ball often is hit very hard toward third base and the lack of distance doesn't give you much time to react. In addition to quick reflexes, you need lots of courage and toughness. When a hard hit ball comes to third, you often only have time to knock the ball down with your body.

### **READY POSITION**

Since the ball can be on top of you so quickly, it's important to position yourself a little lower to the ground than the shortstop or second baseman needs to. You must have your glove lower as well. Be ready for the hot shot hit right at your feet. Remember it's easier and quicker to bring your glove up than it is to drop it down.

### **MOVEMENT**

Fielders at other positions often have the time to round the ball and play it in front of them. For the most part, the third baseman doesn't have this luxury. At third base you must be able to cross over quickly and get to the ball hit to either side. Work very hard on your lateral movement and fielding ground balls, both backhanded and to your glove hand side.

### **BACKHAND PLAY**

The backhand play down the third base line can turn a sure double into a single. Even if you just manage to knock the ball down, you certainly can turn a double into a single. When making a backhanded play a ball hit to your right, make sure you keep your glove in front of your face. Watch the ball all the way into the glove and try and catch it in the webbing. On a backhand, if the ball hits the palm of your glove, it can pop out since you don't have the benefit of using your throwing hand while fielding.

You can field the ball with your left foot in front, your right foot in front, or while diving. No matter how you field the ball, position yourself to make a good throw after the play. If needed, take an extra step toward the line to slow down and make a good strong plant. Once you have planted, take a shuffle step toward first and make a strong throw. Make sure you throw the ball overhand with good 12-6 rotation. Throwing the ball sidearm causes the ball to tail and can make it difficult for the first baseman to catch it.

### **SLOW ROLLER**

Whether a bunted ball or chopped ball on a full swing, the slow roller is one of the most difficult defensive plays. This ball can be fielded one-handed or two-handed, as determined by the speed of the ball and the speed of the runner. No matter how you field the ball, charge the ball hard and then break down with short steps for proper timing, prior to fielding the ball.

If you have time, the surest way to field the ball is two-handed. The next best method of fielding the ball is catching it on your glove hand side while running. You should time it to catch the ball with your left foot planted and your glove out in front. Once you have fielded the ball, quickly transfer the ball and make a throw to first. The final method of fielding the slow roller is to use your bare hand. It's essential that you watch the ball all the way into your hand. Don't pick up your head prior to fielding the ball and leave the ball on the ground.

No matter how you field the ball, make sure you are balanced. Without balance, it is difficult not only to make the catch, but to make the difficult throw to first. Practice fielding the slow roller using all the methods described above.

## **SHORTSTOP**

### **DOUBLE PLAY**

When you are starting a double play, you want to get the ball to the second baseman quickly and accurately. You should be aiming to put the ball on their glove hand side at chest level. This will allow the second baseman to start their momentum moving toward first as the ball is coming. Make sure you don't try to lead them off the base - your throw should be in line with the inside of the bag.

Quickly delivering the ball to second shouldn't be mistaken with rushing. You want to make sure you get that out at second.

### **BALL HIT AT YOU**

On any ball hit directly at you or to your right that you can get in front of, catch the ball as you normally would and instead of moving your feet and body like you do when you're throwing to first, you will want to throw from the fielding position. As you bring the ball up, step slightly toward second with your left foot and use a small arm motion to deliver the ball to second.

### **BALL HIT TO YOUR RIGHT**

On a ball hit to your right that you have to field backhand, you will want to plant your right leg after you make the catch and make a strong accurate throw to second. You may be tempted to jump and throw in one motion after catching the ball, but for most players the arm strength and accuracy aren't there to make this play. It will be quicker and you'll have a better chance if you plant and make a good hard throw to second.

### **BALL HIT TO YOUR LEFT**

On a ball hit to your left that you can get in front of, you will want to deliver the ball underhanded to the second baseman. As you field the ball out in front of you, turn your hips and clear as quickly as you can your glove hand to the left of your body. This will allow the second baseman to clearly see the ball as its being delivered. As you underhand the ball, step with your right foot in the direction of second base. This will help you follow through as you deliver the ball.

Sometimes you will field the ball behind second and won't be able to get in front of it. Fielding the ball off your left side will put you in a position that makes it difficult to underhand the ball. In this case you will need to make a backhand toss to the second baseman. This is a difficult skill and must be practiced over and over again to become good at. With the backhand toss you will turn your thumb towards the ground and with your elbow, toss the ball across your body.

## Other Fundamentals

### Communication

- always talk between pitches and move around
- know where you will throw the ball when it is hit to player
- discuss pick plays, special plays, bunt coverages, and runners
- know hitters and runners of opposing team
- discuss relay assignments

### Pop Flies

- know where the outfield is positioned and depth of play
- use a drop step to open to the same side as the ball → ball over right shoulder, open with right foot
- must go back until behind ball → visual location would be to look up and see ball in front of bill of cap and in front of face
- wave arms so outfielders and infielders know you have the ball

### Priority System of Fly Balls

- outfielders have priority over any infielder
- infield order of priority
  - shortstop
  - second baseman
  - third baseman
  - first baseman
  - pitcher
  - catcher
- all players attempt to catch the ball until a higher priority player calls off
- if you are not fielding the ball, point to ball, cover a base, ANTICIPATE another play
- ball should only be called at apex of flight and is definitely in front of infielder
- calls are made loud and a minimum three times (Mine, Mine, Mine)
- do not use priority when it is an easier play for the other players (SS going back/behind ball)

### Tags

- learn all positioning, footwork – do not keep foot on bag
- take all throws from the side of the bag the infielder is throwing from
- take all throws from the outfielders on the outfield side of the base and allow the ball to carry to player – stay at the bag unless the throw is off line
- catch first, tag second
- keep tag on runner until time is called unless there is another play
- move body to keep ball in front of body on bad throw
- always be ready for another play after tag
- tagging with one hand will make for a quick tag and place body in a more balanced position

### Cutoffs/Relays

- sprint to relay position
- relay depth is determined by outfielder's arm strength
- start the body square from the throw and have a target for the thrower to throw through
- once ball is in flight, turn to have glove side face target (MOVE FEET)
- catch ball in palm of glove with feet moving to target
- play the short throw one of two ways:

1. if ball is coming at feet- can step up to play or field off the bounce
  2. if ball bounces far away- go get ball; plant back leg on catch and throw
- catch with 2 hands always on glove side; move body to ball to get into proper positioning on catch
  - when receiving the ball, keep hands up (better throwing position and faster exchange)
  - know communication – cut base, cut hold, leave
  - basic rules for OF throw
    - throw through the head of the cut person
    - always throw ahead of the lead runner one base

**Tandem Relays** – used when ball is a definite double or more in the OF gap or in the corner of OF

- front cut is approximately 90 feet from ball
- back cut is approximately 20 feet from front cut
- back cut informs front cut of play situation and where throw is to be made
- front cut lines up with the ball and destination base
- cutoff fundamentals apply to tandem relay
- if using a tandem relay, second cutoff needs to be 20-30 feet away from first cutoff for backup
  - when first cutoff receives ball drop down (take self out of play)
  - if the throw to cutoff is on money or on long hop, first cutoff takes
  - if the throw is high or at feet of first cut, second cutoff takes

### **Bunts**

- similar to fielding a slow roller
- get glove down so that fielder gets body down
- terminology for a stationary ball is 'glove touch'
  - put glove down next to ball and have ball aligned with midline of body
- if ball is still moving, field with two hands and make throw to proper base
- push down on stopped ball with bare hand

### **1 Hoppers**

- take glove to ball when at player or on forehand side
- pick through the ball
- understand how to play hops – top, bottom,
- on backhand, see ball into glove and work through ball
  - spread fingers to stop ball in palm of glove
  - elbow position is critical for largest pocket (points out)

### **Underhand Feeds**

- stiff wrist, follow ball, keep eyes on target, show ball early, run past target to help with speed of feed
- target should be belly button to chest

## Rundown Fundamentals

The basic principles:

- Always force runner toward original base. Lead throw should get to the front side player at destination base.
- The backside tag player moves to about 3 feet in front of the original base.
- The front side player should squeeze and shorten distance toward original base
- When the front side player receives the ball, they must **sprint** to make the picked off runner choose a direction toward the original base.
- As you sprint the runner to the original base, step from behind runner to ball side to give you a clear throwing lane. The backside tag player must step to ball side of front side force player to receive the throw.
- Throw the ball like a dart when the backside tag player shows you the palms of his hands and steps toward you. After throwing the ball you follow your throw being careful not to cross the path of the runner.
- Make the play with the least amount of throws possible. One throw or less is best.
- Always make the tag with two hands and the ball in the throwing hand.
- The run down involves the three closest infielders. Pitchers have different roles.
- The outfielders move in and act as back up players and only get involved with the run down if something happens to one of the infielders involved.

***Never allow a picked off runner to be safe at the advanced base. If a mistake is made make it at the base from which the runner came.***

### Positioning of Infield – focus on a zone defense with the placement and alignment

#### Regular Depth

1st/3rd - 5 off bag 9 deep (approx. 22ft. from line)  
2nd/SS – 6-8 off bag 12-14 deep

#### 2 Depth - Double Play Depth

1st holding runner, playing behind runner 6 off 7  
deep 3rd - 6 off 7 deep // 2nd/SS - 4 off 12 deep

#### 3 Depth - runner on 3B and conservative situation

all infielders playing 2-3 steps behind baseline may tweak based on field, runner, inning, opp. Coach

#### 4 Depth - infield in

straight in from 3 depth and to the baseline for depth make sure to know arm strength, runner may adjust and tweak based on situation