

# Fielding

The drills in this section are designed to work all aspects of playing in the field. Proper technique in playing a ball in the field will greatly improve a team's success in reducing runs scored against them. Improving a player's knowledge as to where to play the ball when they receive it along with how to cover other positions when the ball is somewhere else will reduce the number of unnecessary runs scored against. Players should wear their fielding masks if they have them.

Increasing player knowledge will come through repetition and experience. Showing the players these scenarios and having them learn how to defend and prepare will greatly increase their confidence. A confident player is one that is tough to beat, a team full of confident players will be even tougher!

Time estimates for these drills are designed to help a coach prepare a practice plan. Some of these drills, a coach may decide to work for longer periods based on a past game situation that the team struggled with.

**Ready Position** for an infielder, other than the pitcher or catcher, consists of a player standing at their position in the field, feet wider than shoulder width apart, rear end down, glove on or near the ground out in front, their throwing hand is out and extended in front, watching the batter.

**Ready Position** for an outfielder consists of player standing in their position in the field, glove and throwing hand relaxed, slightly moving back and forth and watching the batter.

**Good Throwing Position**, a player's throwing position during fielding drills should be that their elbows are up, proper grip on the ball, eyes on the target, step and follow through.

## Fielding Drills

### **Infield Ground Balls** – hitter, catcher, regular balls 3-12 players

This drill will have the players receiving ground balls and then throwing them to either a coach or player. This drill is a common warm up drill in pre-game as well as a staple in regular practice.

There are multiple ways to do this drill, the players can lineup in small groups at each infield position or they can all just lineup in single file at one set location. If the players are in an infield scenario, then the drill is throwing to 1<sup>st</sup> base, if the players are just in a lineup, have them throw back to the hitter (home plate) where a catcher will receive the ball.

The coach is looking for good pick up techniques where the player moves to the ball and receives it on the inside of their front glove side foot for a forehand pickup. From there, the coach will look to ensure the player has good footwork on their throw, stepping toward the base and following through on their throw. The coach will also look to have the player's target the chest of the receiving player on the throw. This will prevent bad throws and reduce extra bases for the runner.

15 minutes

## **Back hand and fore hand** – hitter, catcher, regular balls 3-12 players

Like the ground ball drills, this drill will help a player to pick up a ground ball but it will specialize the technique for a ball that isn't hit directly to them.

Players can line up at one position in the infield or just in a straight line, if you have more coaches, try breaking up the players in two lines for increased repetition. There are 2 ways to run this drill:

- **Ground Ball**

This will be a standard ground ball rolled from the coach at about 20 feet away to either side of the player. The player should be able to reach the ball without having to move away from their starting position.

The player on the **fore hand** pickup will step forward with their glove hand and make the pick up. Then transition to their throwing position by stepping and throwing back to the catcher. Move to the back of the line, do over on a miss.

The player on the **back-hand** pickup will turn their body to the side of their throwing hand so their back is partially facing away from the hitter. Their glove will be open and facing the incoming ball and the player will attempt the pickup by moving their glove toward the ball. The player's elbow of their glove hand should be bent and the height of their body from the ground should be controlled with their legs. From there, the player will transition to their throwing position and throw back to the catcher.

- **One-hop pick-ups**

This will be a one bounce ball thrown by the coach at about 20 feet away to either side of the player. The player should be able to reach the ball without having to move away from their starting position.

The player on the **fore hand** pickup will step forward with their glove hand and make the pick up. The player will attempt to time the bounce so they can make a clean pickup, this could require additional steps forward if the throw is off. Then transition to their throwing position by stepping and throwing back to the catcher. Move to the back of the line, do over on a miss.

The player on the **back-hand** pickup will turn their body to the side of their throwing hand so their back is partially facing away from the hitter. Their glove will be open and facing the incoming ball and the player will attempt the pickup by timing the bounce and moving their glove toward the ball. The player's elbow of their glove hand should be bent and the height of their body from the ground should be controlled with their legs. From there, the player will transition to their throwing position and throw back to the catcher.

For both drills, try and work the players out of stabbing at the ball. The idea is to create a confident pickup that leads to a smooth transition into a throw. The player will be balanced and less likely to make a throwing error.

15 minutes

**Bare hand drill** – no gloves, regular balls 2-12 players

The objective in this drill is to really work the players on the importance of two hand catches. This will lead to muscle memory when picking up ground balls and transitioning to throwing.

The players can pair up with one ball between the two of them. They players then roll the ball back and forth to each other making two hand ground ball pickups with a quick transition into their throwing position before rolling it back to their partner.

This is not a speed drill, coaches look for good pickups with two hands on the player's glove side foot and then a transition into a good throwing position.

10 minutes

**Fly ball catches, 2 hand techniques** – regular balls 3-12 players

The objective of this drill is to work the players on getting a good position on making a catch on a fly ball and controlling the catch with 2 hands. This will lead to a good transition into a throw back to the infield to deter runners from advancing.

There can be different setups to this drill depending on how the players are doing. The players can line up in a straight line and the fly balls can be directed to their ready location. The other option is to have the players start in one location and send the fly ball to another and have them run to make the catch. Throw the balls from 60-100 feet depending on the age group.

When the player runs for the ball, ensure they are drop stepping with the correct foot, a ball to the player's right will require them to step first with their right foot, left foot on the left side. This ensures that they will have a better chance to make the catch.

Two hands when making the catch will then ensure a smooth transition to their throwing position and then making a throw into the catcher. Have the player try again on a miss, correcting mistakes on movement or lack of hands.

15 minutes

**Fly ball positioning** - tennis balls, tennis racket and helmet 3-12 players

This drill is designed to have the player get under the fly ball, ensuring a good position for a catch.

Have the players don their batting helmets and have them out about 80 feet away from the coach. The coach will then hit fly balls into the air to the left or the right of the player, the player will attempt to run under the ball and have the tennis ball hit them in the helmet. This will help build the player's confidence in getting under the ball.

Ensure that the player is watching the ball all the way in and at the last second, letting it hit the helmet, some will get lucky but try and keep the player watching the whole time. The attempt here is to have the player get into position quickly and watch the ball into their glove. It's extremely fun for the players, so it can be a regular activity.

15 minutes

## **Relay throws** – regular balls 4-6 players in a row

This drill is designed to train the players to accept a throw from another player and turn and relay the ball to another location quickly.

Have the players get in rows of 4-6 people and about 25-30 feet away from each other. Then start at one end and have the players throw to the next person down the row, when they reach the end, send it back down the row to the starting person. This is a fun relay for the players and making it a competition can help enhance the point of it.

Coaches should be looking for good two hand catches, good turns to the glove side of the player and good strong throws to the recipient's chest. Have the slower rows do a couple push ups or something to promote the competition.

15 minutes

## **Coverages** – team on the field, regular balls

There are lots of different coverages out there, we will briefly cover the most common but for more detail, engage a senior coach for a practice or there are video resources available as well that will help in understanding who needs to be where during certain plays.

The most common are:

- Bunt Coverage

This is when the hitter has bunted the ball or has squared around to bunt, the first base person and the 3<sup>rd</sup> base person will charge the plate. From there, depending on who is on base, the other players have places to go to cover for those who are attempting to play the ball.

- 2<sup>nd</sup> base pick off

This is when the catcher throws the ball down to 2<sup>nd</sup> base to throw out a runner stealing second. The shortstop will be receiving the ball at the base, the 2<sup>nd</sup> base person will circle in behind 2<sup>nd</sup> to cover the throw.

- Outfield Coverages

Outfielders need to help each other out on every hit to the outfield by running for a ball hit to their closest outfield teammate, this helps if one player falls or misses the ball, the other can get the ball and throw it in.

Outfielders also have the responsibility to help cover infield bases on throws as well. Those vary on the play but outfielders will never just be standing around!

There are lots of videos on coverages, not all will necessarily be encountered or required at every age group, although, these should be worked on with every age group so their transition to the next age level doesn't come with a pile of new learning required.

Make it apart of every fielding practice plan to bring up and work on a couple coverages so that in time, the players will do them without thinking out there.

15-30 minutes