

Infield Skills and Drills

The following document is a high-level introduction to some infield skills and description of potential drills.

Skills

Ready vs Fielding Position

- There is a distinction between the two.
- *Ready Position*:
 - a. “Creeping”: take little steps toward the plate or sway back and forth. Begins when the pitcher loads. As the ball reaches the plate couple approaches.
 - i. Small hop
 - ii. Step right/left (for right-hand thrower).
 - b. Athletic. Feet more than shoulder width apart. Knees bent down and inward to allow movement in both directions. Can show glove or hang to the side. **GLOVE SHOULDN'T BE ON THE GROUND YET** (exception might be 3rd baseman depending on starting position).
- *Fielding Position*:
 - a. Fielding position as pitch is delivered → limits mobility
 - b. Glove on the ground, flat back, hands in front. The deeper the ball is fielded the harder it is to see.
 - c. Fingertips pointing down to create backstop; otherwise if fingers flat creating a ramp.
 - d. Feet more than shoulder width apart. Stay big, no “pencils” as receive ball.
 - e. Feet slightly staggered, with lead foot in front.
 - f. Field ball on glove side

Fielding Footwork

- Emphasis charging the ball.
- “Right→Left→Field” (right-hand thrower): as approaching ball, plant right foot, left foot and then field.
- Some coaches discuss the fielding triangle (formed by arms and glove if in proper fielding position)
- No Helicopters. Address the ball like a plane gradually getting lower.

Throwing Footwork

- “Right→Left→Throw” (right-hand thrower): three methods depending on the situation.
 - a. Replace feet (shuffle). Simultaneously bring back foot to front foot and stride with front foot.
 - b. Step thru: Back foot steps toward the target and finish with front foot.
 - c. Step behind: Back foot steps behind and finish with front foot. Technique when ball is hit to SS forehand and play is 1st base.

Field to Throw Transition

- Break underneath: as field the ball, instantly get the ball out of the glove with throwing hand. Separate the hands with the thumbs down. This gets you into a position of power, locking your front shoulder in on your target.
- Or bring glove to throwing hand as quickly as possible

Covering Steals

- Player doesn't leave until the ball crosses home plate.
- Player needs to find the base as quickly as possible without losing sight of the catcher.
- Recommend positioning the player in front of the base. This provides an open path (avoid the baserunner) if the throw is up the baseline. Advanced move: Good throw → step back leg over the base and straddle.
- Make sure stay low receiving the ball.
- Let the ball travel. Do not reach for the ball.
- Tag baserunner with a “V” motion.

First Baseman

- Glove side foot and glove are on a string. Wherever the glove goes the foot should follow.
- Stay “neutral” position before the ball is throw. Belly-button is facing the fielder.
- Do not stretch until the ball approaches. If stretch to early, left in vulnerable position where difficult to react if bad throw.
- Catch with one hand. Catch with 2 hands limits ranges and is slower especially if bad throw.

BackHand

- Glove in front of body.
- Need to stay low. Throwing hand should be able to touch the ground
- Use elbow as hinge. Elbow should go first and then glove. “Rake thru the ball”
- Do not hinge at wrist otherwise might flip the ball out of glove.

Double Play Footwork (6-4-3)

- SS throw to the base not the 2nd baseman.
- Second baseman needs to find the middle of the base ASAP.
- Second baseman needs to be in good athletic position ready to receive the ball (thumbs up)
- Catch with throwing hand on the outside of glove to help with quick transfer.
Two options for 2nd Baseman to clear a path from the baserunner
 - a. Left foot on the outside of the bag. As catch the ball, push off with left foot, plant right foot and throw
 - b. Left foot on the inside of the bag. As catch the ball, push off with left foot, bring right foot to the target and plant, then throw.

Double Play Footwork (4-6-3)

- 2nd Baseman throw to the base not the SS.
- SS needs to find the outside corner of the base ASAP.
- SS needs to be in good athletic position ready to receive the ball (thumbs up)
- 2nd Baseman throw to the outside corner of the base.
Two options for 2nd Baseman to clear a path from the baserunner
 - a. Right foot of the outside corner of the bag. As catch the ball quick step with left foot and body to create straight line to first base, then right – left – throw.
 - b. Straddling the outside corner of the bag. As catch the ball quick step with left foot and body to create straight line to first base, then drag right foot to clip the outside corner of base, then right foot plant – left – throw. This option is more applicable if SS not at the base in time.

Miscellaneous

- Always Expect a Bad Throw!
- “Ball First” - recognize bad throw, go get ball.
- Most errors are the result of the player not being mentally prepared to field the ball.
- “Mine, Mine, Mine”: fly-ball communication by infield
- “Round the ball”: slow roller to SS play is 1st → circle the ball → get better angle to 1st

Drills

Fielding Progression (rolling)

Objective: Glove work

Description:

- a. Two lines, partners across from them about 5-10 feet
- b. Player take turns rolling slow grounders to each other. Work on middle, forehand and backhand
- c. Same as (b) except short hops.
- d. Good quick drill to start

Carousel

Objective: Fun fielding game for younger ages

Description:

- a. 2-4 players. Line up about 5 feet from coach.
- b. Create a circle with cones.
- c. Coach rolls ball to the first player in line.
- d. Player fields the ball, flips the ball to the coach and start running the circle.
- e. Repeat steps (c) and (d) for the remaining players. Simulates a carousel if go fast enough.

Follow Your Throw

Objective: Fielding, throwing momentum to the target and a little conditioning.

Description:

- a. Line at SS, player at 1st, 2nd and 3rd base.
- b. Coach hits grounder to SS, SS throws to 1st base, SS follows throw to 1st base
- c. 1st base throws to 2nd base and follows throw to 2nd base
- d. 2nd base throws to 3rd base and follows throw to 3rd base.
- e. 3rd base throws home and goes to the end of the line at SS.

Backhand/Forehand

Objective: Forehand and Backhand

Description:

- a. Set two cones about 8-10 feet apart on a straight line.
- b. Backhand: Start behind left cone, circle the right cone from the inside and run back to the starting cone. As the player approaches the starting cone coach rolls a grounder to forehand.
- c. Forehand: Start behind right cone, circle the left cone from the inside and run back to the starting cone. As the player approaches the starting cone coach rolls a grounder to backhand.

Right/Left Field, Right/Left Throw

Objective: Footwork fielding and throwing.

Description:

- a. Setup 4 cones in a straight line (vertically) about 4-5 feet apart.
- b. Player starts about 5 away from the 1st cone.
- c. With ball in glove, player runs towards right of the first cone.
- d. As approach the cone player performs "right / left" footwork, such that simulate fielding the ball directly behind the cone. Make sure players have glove on the ground.
- e. Execute one of the throwing "right / left" footwork methods (see above).
- f. Throw the ball to the coach. Receive the ball back from the coach and go to the end of the line.
- g. Repeat steps (a)-(f) for the other 3 cones. Works on fielding range.

Diagonal Infield (SS/2nd)

Objective: Fielding, throwing and receiving

Description:

- a. Divide players into 2 groups. Place a bucket behind 2nd base.
- b. 1 group at SS and 1 group at 2nd base position
- c. Coach on first base side hits balls to SS
- d. Coach on third base side hits balls to 2nd
- e. After fielding the ball, have the players “freeze” so coaches can view fielding position.
- f. Players place the ball in the bucket and switch lines.

Rapid Fire

Objective: Receiving ball at base (especially for 1st baseman). Develop proper glove and footwork.

Description:

- a. Coach with 5-10 balls. Player is on the base in neutral position (belly button at coach).
- b. Coach will throw balls in a row with the player catching and dropping immediately.
- c. Coach will throw good and bad throws. Player needs to understand whether to hold the bag (good throw) or leave bag (bad throw).

Multi-Situational

Objective: Simulate different situations

Description:

- a. One player at SS, two players at 2nd base and the rest of the line at first base
- b. Coach hits hard grounder to SS, SS throws to 2nd base. Work on force outs.
- c. Coach hits slow roller to SS, SS throws to 1st base.
- d. Player runs to right fielder and receives a fly ball from player/coach. Player goes to the end of line at 1st.
- e. Player at 2nd base goes to SS, backup at 2nd steps in and the 1st baseman runs to end of line at 2nd base.

Tennis

Objective: Soft hands, reaction time. Different drill to mix it up.

Description:

- a. Players line up at 3rd base. Glove or no glove (coach decision).
- b. Coach hits tennis balls with racquet. Player will need to demonstrate proper fielding form.

2nd/SS double play and force out

Objective: Footwork on second base bag depending on the situation (w/ Ghost Runner on 1st)

Description:

- a. Divide players into 2 groups, one at SS and the other 2nd base
- b. 2nd base cover, 1 out: Coach hits first ball to SS and 2nd baseman will use proper double play footwork.
- c. 2nd base cover, 2 out: Coach hits second ball to SS and 2nd baseman will use force out footwork (act like a first baseman)
- d. Repeat steps (b) and (c) with SS covering and hitting balls to 2nd baseman.

Covering steal

Objective: Covering 3rd base on a steal

Description:

- a. Player at normal 3rd base position.
- b. Coach yells “going”. Play runs to 3rd base (use correct technique described above).
- c. Coach will throw 3 consecutive balls to 3rd base. Player receives and applies tag.
- d. Work in good and bad throws.

Crossfire Drill

Objective: This drill teaches concentration, good fielding skills- butt down, shuffle in front of ball, glove in the dirt, charge the ball, good throws

Description:

- a. 2 lines of player - one line centered at SS and the other at 2nd base position
- b. 2 coaches, 2 buckets of balls, two catchers near coaches. One coach lines up between home and first and the other line up between home and third base.
- c. Coaches hit ground balls / line drive simultaneously to fielders directly across from then and the balls cross each other in the center of field.
- d. Players field the ball and throw to ball catcher next to coach then drop the ball in the bucket and rotate out to infield position. Fielder rotates in to ball catcher position line.
- e. Players always rotate away from action.

Race Drill

Objective: This drill is great for catchers to practice throwing down to second on a steal and tagging a runner out at home plate. Infielders need to work on back up coverage and good accurate fast throws. Base runners work on timing their rock off first base, taking good line around third base and sliding into second and home. Coach can shorten up the throwing sequence by yelling to throw the ball home or just eliminate the last throw from second to first and just have the second base player go home with the ball to make the tag at the plate.

Description:

- a. Produce an entire infield including a pitcher and catcher. Have the remaining players line up at first base to run the bases.
- b. The pitcher pitches the ball, the runner at first takes off to steal second base, the catcher will receive the pitch and pop up and throw to second to pick off the steal.
- c. Right away after the play at second the race begins. The runner gets up right away and begins to race for home plate. SS begins a throwing sequence race.
- d. SS throws the ball to 1B, 1B throws the ball to 3B, 3B throws the ball to 2B, 2B the ball to 1B, and 1B throws the ball to home plate to catcher to make the tag on the base runner. Baserunner must slide at home.

Infield Throws and Runs

Objective: Focuses on good throws and conditioning the players.

Description:

- a. Have a few girls line up at each base including home plate.
- b. The players throw the ball a head of the base runner then runs to the next base themselves.
- c. Catcher will start the drill by throwing the ball to second base and then running to first base.
- d. The second base player will catch the ball and then throw the ball a head of the runner heading to first base then runs to third base.
- e. The first base player will catch the ball and then throw the ball a head of the runner heading to third base then runs to second base.
- f. The third base player will catch the ball and then throw the ball a head or the runner heading to second base then runs to home plate.
- g. The second base player will catch the ball and then throw the ball a head of the runner heading to home plate then runs to third base.
- h. And so on.
- i. Each time a player runs to the next base a player behind them will move into position to take the next throw.

Shuffle

Objective: Quickness drill for line drives and ground balls

Description:

- a. Split the players up and make two or three stations
- b. Set up two cones about 15 feet apart and put a bucket of balls at each station
- c. Player will shuffle back and forth between cones as fast as possible as the coach throws ball from one side to the other side.
- d. One player will feed balls to coach to throw.
- e. Coach will throw about 10 balls
- f. Have all the players do line drive throws first then switch and have all the players do ground ball throws
- g. Can do this more than one rotation and have the girls count balls caught.

Standard Infield Practice

Objective: Standard infield work with live base runners.

Description:

- a. Pitcher will pitch ball to catcher
- b. Coach will have a bucket of ball. Coach will call the play and then hit a ball of bat.

Bunt Coverage

Objective: Players will work on bunt coverage

Description:

- a. Set up an infield with a pitcher and a catcher
- b. Have the pitcher throw a pitch
- c. Have first and third work on creeping depending on the coverage called
- d. Catcher will catch pitch and toss ball off to the side or behind her out of the way
- e. Coach will have a bucket of balls and will lay down a bunt with one of the balls from the bucket
- f. Make sure to pick up loose balls after the play or throw it back to the pitcher or in the bucket

Hot Box

Objective: Players will work on hot box situations with live runners

Description:

- a. Set up hot box situation between first base and second base
- b. Set up hot box situation between third base and home plate.
- c. Practice backing up and covering bases accordingly.

First and Third Plays with Base Runners

Objective: Teaches the players how to execute first and third plays with live base runners

Description:

- a. Produce an infield with pitcher and a catcher
- b. Have runners at first and third base.
- c. Coach will call out the play and pitcher will throw a pitch.
- d. Runners will take off and the catcher and infield will execute the play.

Pick-Off

Objective: Players practice pick off plays at first and third base as well as teaching left and right field back up correctly.

Description:

- a. Produce an infield with a pitcher and catcher as well as a left and right field
- a. Have a coach out at the third and first base line with a bucket of ball to simulate an over throw
- b. Have live base runners at first and third base. Their job is to get a good lead off and then head back to the base. Not to advance.
- c. The catcher will signal a pickoff play.

- d. Pitcher will pitch the ball to catcher and catcher will execute the play at the same time the coach will over throw first and third base to out fielder
- e. Catcher will throw the ball to called play at first or third and base person will try to make the tag.
- f. Left fielder will field overthrow and then throw to the catcher at home plate / right fielder will throw the ball to second base.

Back Up

Objective: Teach the players to always be ready to back each other up

Description:

- a. Set up two cones in line with each other one cone about 20 feet behind the first cone in the infield
- b. The players will come out in groups of two, one behind the other
- c. The player in back will move out to position and turn around
- d. The coach will show one or two fingers, one finger will tell the first girl to make the play,
- e. two fingers will tell the first player to go after the ball and miss or deflect the ball
- f. Coach will tell the player in back to go and she will turn around, coach will hit the ball and the players will react to the play called
- g. Coach can hit both fly balls and ground balls to for the players to field.
- h. Can set this up in two groups if enough players and room

Four Corners

Objective: Works on throwing accuracy / running speed / conditioning / quick throwing transitions

Description:

- a. One player at every base
- b. Have all the remaining players line up at home plate
- c. The drill begins by having the player at home throw the ball to first base, she then runs to first base
- d. The player at first base catches the ball and throws the ball to second base, she then runs to second
- e. And so on until the ball gets thrown home, then next player in line stars the drill again
- f. Once the third base player throws and runs home this player will get to the back of the line at home plate

Ground Ball

Objective: Works on proper form and technique for fielding various ground balls / accurate throws / pursuit angle.

Description:

- a. Break up the players into two groups, split the infield in half with one group on each side, players will line up and come forward one at a time = Quickly
- b. Coach will hit 3 different locations = left side / right side / and center
- c. Players will work on pursuit angle, position of glove (back hand and front hand), charging ball, butt down, knees bent, glove in dirt, gradual decent on ball, pop up quick and throw ball.
- d. Have the players rotate receiving the catch or coach catch.
- e. Rotate through the entire line of players before coach changes direction of the hit.
- f. Set up a cone as a starting position if girls cheat on ball
- g. Can do this very quickly with two buckets = one to feed the coach with balls to hit and one to drop balls into after throw is made to a person or player catching.

Throw on the Run (advanced)

Objective: Footwork when throwing on the run and receiving.

Description:

- a. Coach bunts to 3B, 3B throws on the run to 1B. 3B goes to back of line at SS. 1B goes to back of line at C.
- b. Coach hits soft grounder to SS, SS throws on the run to home. Receiver works on tag. SS goes to back line of 1B.

Quick Reaction

Objective: First step

Description:

- a. Player starts in the middle of two cones.
- b. Hops over the right cone back to middle, then hops over left cone back to middle.
- c. Once back in middle, ball is rolled/hit to either direction and the player needs to react and field the grounder.