

Fundamentals of Infield

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Agenda

- Fielding Groundballs

- Stance
- Approach
- Securing the Ball
- Foot work
- Glove hand vs. back hand
- Charging the Ball
- Fielding Bunts

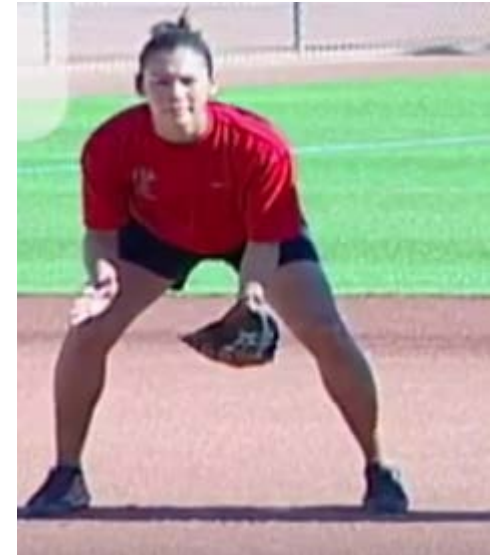
- Position Play

- Key Concept of Ball / Base / Backup
- Fielding Priorities
- Relays
- Short Stop
- Second Base
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Fielding Ground Balls

Stance

- The ready position is in an **athletic position**, with hands in “**pistol ready**” with both thumbs pointing up
- Feet have a wide base with weight on the balls of your feet
- Shoulders and hips square to the plate
- Key is to stay low and bend from the knees and not from the waist
- Need to be prepared to move 4 different ways (front/back/right/left) so don't have one foot further in front of the other
- Getting in your ready position should be timed with the pitcher's windup so that when ball is released you are 100% ready with knees bent, pistol-ready, on balls of feet, etc.
- For balls that are hit side-to-side don't stand up to attack the ball, always keep a lowering center of gravity



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TM6hnPz8-uo>

Approaching the Ball

- Approach a ground ball as if you were an **airplane** coming in for a landing, vs a helicopter suddenly lowering itself
- This means you want to gradually lower your center of gravity
- You also want to approach the ball so that the ball is on your glove hand side
- Infield Drills B2 and B5 can help teach the proper approach
- For more advanced players, they need to round to the ball so they are in a better position to throw the ball to the target, so as to use their momentum to help with the throw



Securing the Ball

- Think of fielding as if a **triangle** in front of you but the tip/apex of the triangle is more glove side, i.e. field ball on glove hand side
- Secure the ball with your glove out front and throwing hand **alligatoring** the ball (i.e. “covers” the ball), but key is you are using 2 hands
- Alligatoring with your throwing hand has 2 advantages
 - Protects the fielder’s chest and face if the ball were take a weird hop – better to have the ball hit the hand vs. face
 - Makes for a quicker transition to throwing the ball as the throwing hand is now close to the ball in the glove
- Important that throwing hand fingers are pointing to the sky so as not to get fingers jammed
- See the ball go into the glove, i.e. **eyes on the ball**
- Also emphasize having the butt down
- Infield Drills B2-B4 focus a great deal on this



Examples of Drills that Focus on Approach and Hand Positioning (B2-B4, A4)



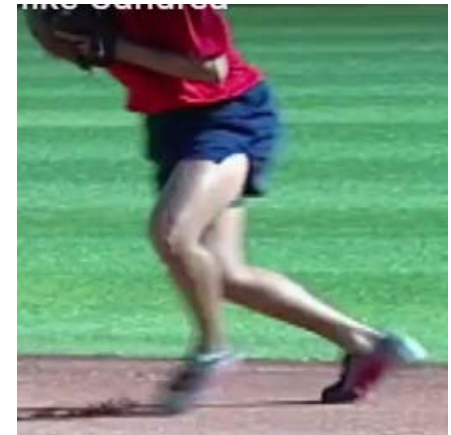
Footwork

- Once the ball is secured, you need to transition into your throw
- If you are a righty, for most fielded ground balls you should step forward towards the target with your right foot (left for lefty), with the inner part of the right foot pointing to the target
 - For harder/sharp hit balls, you may have to step backwards, but point is transition your body using your throwing side foot to get in proper throwing motion toward the target
- Then begin thumb-to-thigh etc. while positioning your body for the throw (see fundamentals of throwing)



Glove Hand

- Not every ball is going to be hit directly to you, so you may need to field the ball on glove or back hand
- One should pivot to the glove or back hand side to field the ball
- Angle to the balls should be based on reading the ball in terms of how hard it is hit
- Glove reaches out
- For glove hand side once the ball is secured you typically you need to step behind to get hips and shoulders turned to make throw



Back Hand

- For righties, left foot forward
- Keep knees bent and low to the ground when going to field the ball
- Turn glove thumb side
- Use elbow as hinge when fielding
- Set feet before you throw, e.g. set throwing side foot to position yourself to where you are going to throw ball



Key Note About Glove Hand/Back Hand Fielding

- Only use glove hand/back hand fielding if you can't get behind the ground ball, i.e. don't get lazy and revert to backhands when you can field normally
- Work on drills 12 and 13 as well as A3 in Infield Drills to get players comfortable moving right and left and only doing a glove hand or back hand when they really can't field it normally



Charging the Ball

- For slower hit balls, players should learn how to charge the ball
- For high bouncers, field the ball with 2 hands while charging
- For slow rollers, keep glove low or on the ground while charging, and field ball outside your glove side foot, and with one hand
 - Important to keep low and with knees bent vs. standing up as ball can bounce under the glove
- For both high bouncers and slow rollers, keep head down and run through the fielding of the ball and then set feet and throw ball



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6HarnrsVnU>

Fielding Bunts

- This is more applicable to 3B and 1B
- When you see batter square for a bunt, the 3B and 1B should start creeping in
- If bunted, 3B and 1B should crash in
- Glove should be out and down low as you crash the bunt
- Position your body when fielding the ball so that you don't have to make major turn to the throw's target, so you may have to partially circle around the ball
- Field ball with knees bent and body low



Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zHz_QZ8cDg

Fielding Bunts – Advanced Players

- For older/advanced players, and moreso for players at 1B, you actually field that ball using your throwing hand and the outside of your glove as you don't want to waste time getting the ball in and out of your glove
- As you charge turn glove thumb side
- Then you want to scoop the ball up with your hand and use the glove to help you scoop – in effect you want to reduce transfer time to your throwing hand
- And then quickly get into throwing position



Drill for Fielding Bunts for Advanced Players

- A good drill to work on scooping up a bunt is to line up 5 balls and then from 3B rush towards the ball, scoop up the first ball and throw to 1B, then scoop and throw the others right after that



Position Play

Key Concept of Ball/Base/Backup

- Once you teach the basics of fielding ground balls etc. then teach the concept of when playing infield to focus on the 3 Bs: Ball Base Backup
- #1 **Ball** – if the ball is hit to you, the fielder should immediately field it and throw to proper target
- #2 **Base** – if the Ball is not hit to you, the infielder should cover the appropriate base. Infielders should be taught under what scenarios they cover which base and have that understanding before the new batter is up to the plate
- #3 **Backup** – if the Ball is not hit to you, and you don't cover a Base, then you should be Backing up. This is clearly applicable to an outfielder (e.g. RF backing up the throw to 1st Base or LF backing up 3rd base for a play there), but could also apply to the infield (e.g. SS backing up the 2B if a throw is coming from RF into 2nd Base)

Fielding Priorities

- If the ball is hit between 2 players, the players should be taught to call “Ball ball ball” for whomever has the best chance to field it
- In terms of priorities:
 - SS has priority over entire infield should she call ball
 - 2nd has priority over 1st
 - Pitcher yields to all infielders
 - Catcher yields to infielders and pitcher
 - All infielders yield to outfielders
 - Bunts have their own priorities (see Position Play)

Relays

(For older/more advanced players)

- When infielder is acting as “cut” / relay of ball being thrown in from outfield, they should position their body to catch ball near shoulder of glove side so infielder can better rotate and make continuous motion to throw to infield
- See A6 of Infield Drills



Position Play: Short Stop

Short Stop: Positioning

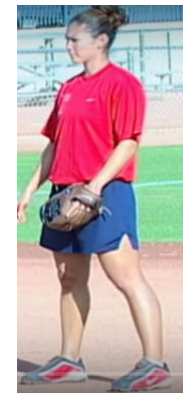
- Positions are
 - Deep – to defend against players who can hit the ball hard; position is typically near the grass
 - Mid-way – to protect against players who don't hit as hard or players who typically bunt or slap
 - Playing in – typically when the play is at home, e.g. when the bases are loaded with less than 2 outs. Playing in is just inside the base path from 2nd to 3rd so there is no collisions



Deep



Mid-way



Playing in

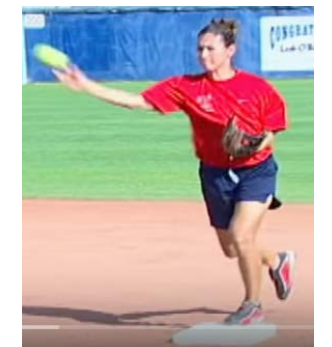
Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yV0Cljuiz4o> (3:51 to 12:10)

Short Stop: Responsibilities

- Initial responsibility is field the **Ball**
- Second responsibility is to cover a **Base**
 - Typically that is covering 2nd base for balls hit to 1B or 2B or to RF
 - In certain situations the SS needs to cover 3rd base on a bunt to 3rd with a runner on 2nd Base
- Third responsibility is **Backup**, and that typically takes the form of acting as the “cut” (i.e. relay) to deep balls hit in the left side of the outfield with a play at 2nd Base (i.e. SS receives ball from LF and throws to 2B)

Short Stop: Double Plays

- SS should be trained to get to the force at 2nd base if there is a runner at 1st
- If Ball hit to the SS, the throw should be made to 2B covering 2nd Base
 - For balls away from 2nd Base: Field ball on the throwing hand side of the body, then take jab step towards 2nd base to open up hips and throw to 2nd base
 - For Balls near 2nd Base: if ball is hit near 2nd base, the SS should do an underhand flip to the 2B covering 2nd base. Key with the underhand flip is for SS to keep moving toward 2nd Base and have glove away from ball in throwing hand so 2nd base can clearly see the ball being tossed
 - For Balls right at 2nd Base: SS should field ball, touch 2nd base, and then throw to 1st Base



Short Stop: Double Plays (Continued)

- If the ball is hit to the 2nd Base side and fielded by 2B or 1B or Pitcher, then SS should cover 2nd Base
 - If ball is fielded by 1B or Pitcher and throw is 2nd Base that is covered by SS, then SS's left foot should be on 2nd Base, allowing the SS to throw to 1st Base but not in the path of the runner coming to 2nd Base
 - If ball is fielded by 2B and throw to SS covered 2nd base, then right foot should be on back part of bag, ball is caught, and then stop out of the runners path to throw to 1st Base
- See Infield Drills B11 and I1 for good drills to help train infielders on covering double plays



Short Stop: Receiving Throws

- On tag plays, key is for the SS to keep the glove low (i.e. waist height) as a target
- For throws coming from RF, the SS should straddle the bag as shown in the photos on the right
- Below is the straddle from CF



Short Stop: Covering Steals

- SS can cover a steal at 2nd Base by either being to the corner of the bag as shown in the photo in the upper right or by straddling the bag as shown in the photo in the lower right



Position Play: Second Base

Second Base: Positioning

- Like SS, 2B can play Deep, Half Way or Play In (see SS positioning descriptions for what depth the fielder should take given the scenario)
- Besides covering 2nd base when the ball is to the left side of the field, 2B also has to cover 1st Base on bunt situations
- For bunt situations, 2B should “cheat up” by playing in but not move towards 1st Base as to leave a gap in the infield

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yV0Cljuiz4o> (12:21 to 19:16)

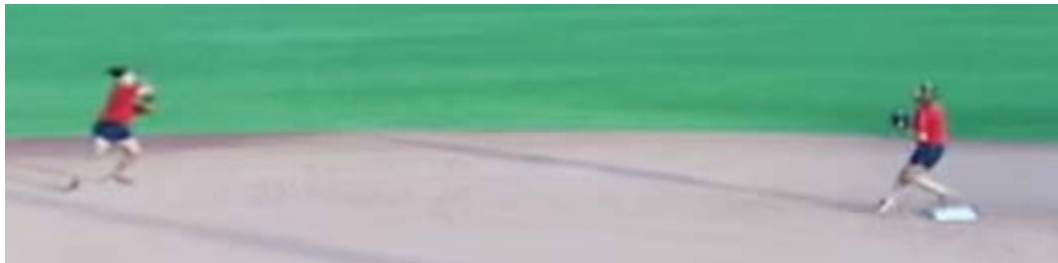
Second Base: Double Plays

- For balls hit to 2B in a double play situation, after the 2B fields ball they then open up hips to throw to SS at 2nd base
- With the open hip approach to throwing, no step is needed to make the throw to 2nd base
- For balls fielded close to 2nd base, the 2B can do an underhand feed



Second Base: Double Plays (Continued)

- For balls hit to the left side of the infield, the 2B should cover 2nd
- Key is to get to the bag as soon as possible but no block with your foot/leg that path of the runner into 2nd base
- After catching the ball with your foot on the bag, then step off bag and make throw to 1st Base in a different lane from the runner coming into 2nd base



Second Base: Bunts

- When 2B covers 1st base on a bunt, key is for the 2B to be square to the pitcher or 1B or catcher who covers the bunt
- This gives the thrower a nice lane to get the ball to 1st Base
- Secure the ball when you catch it using both hands



Position Play: Third Base

Third Base: Positioning

- Typically 3B plays close to the line and a few feet in towards home from the base
- For younger/less experienced players, or when facing a hard hitting batter who is not likely to bunt, the 3B can move even with the bag
- For bunt situations, the 3B should start cheating in while keeping a low center of gravity (i.e. lower your stance)



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yV0Cljuiz4o> (19:19 to 26:27)

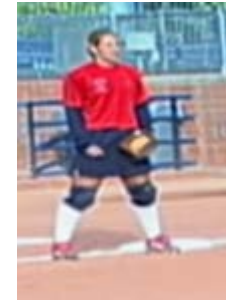
Third Base: Bunt Coverage

- 3B should cover a bunt by fielding the ball in a body position that can most easily facilitate the direction in which they plan to throw
- In other words, you round to the ball when fielding it so you have momentum going towards 1st Base



Third Base: Receiving Throws

- If receiving throws from right side of the field, the 3B will line up with foot on base but on the side closer to home, so as to give runner a lane / path to the base
- If receiving throw from LF, the 3B will line up on the other side of the bag (ie outside part of the bag)



Position Play: First Base

First Base: Positioning

- Typically there are 3 positions:
 - Deep (when you know the hitter is swinging away) – 1B should be near the 1st base
 - Normal – 1B is a few feet down the line towards home
 - Shallow – when 1B thinks the batter will bunt, and is playing low
- At all times the 1B is relatively close to the 1st base line, maybe 4-6 feet away from the line



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yV0Cljuiz4o> (26:31 to 37:00)

First Base: Covering Bunts

- See “Covering Bunts” in Fielding Groundballs section
- Key is to properly round to the ball so you field the ball in the best position to throw the ball to 1st Base



First Base: Throwing from 1st to 2nd Base

- Righties at 1B after fielding the ball will spin their body around to make the throw to 2nd Base when trying to do a double play / force at 2nd base
- It is almost like a jump step that righties have to do at 1B to throw to 2nd Base



First Base: Foot Work for Receiving Throws

- When receiving a throw at 1st Base, the 1B should
 - Get to the bag with their throwing side foot but have feet relatively close to each other (foot be outer part of bag so as not to get clipped by runner going to 1st Base)
 - Open up towards the infield and anticipate a bad throw
 - Step to the ball with their glove side foot when catching the ball

