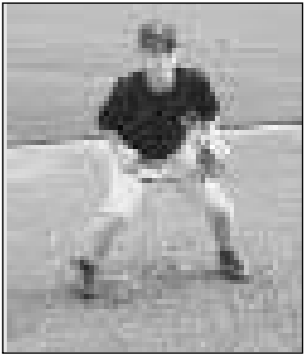


FUNDAMENTALS

A. Ready Position: Get into an athletic position with knees flexed and weight distributed evenly on the balls of the feet. The weight should remain inside the knees. The body should be balanced and ready to react in any direction. The hands are off the knees, and the eyes are focused on the hitting zone. This is the ready position for players not advanced enough for pre-pitch movement (ages 6-9). It is also the position a player ends up in after pre-pitch movement steps are taken. **(picture 4-1)**

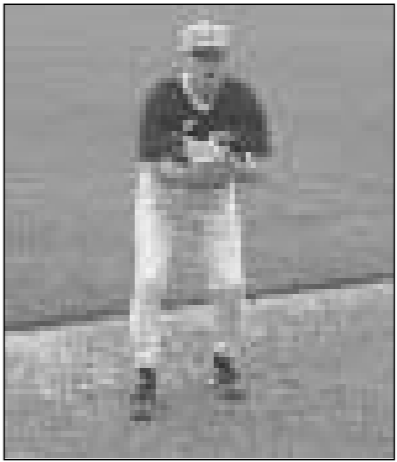


4-1: Ready position

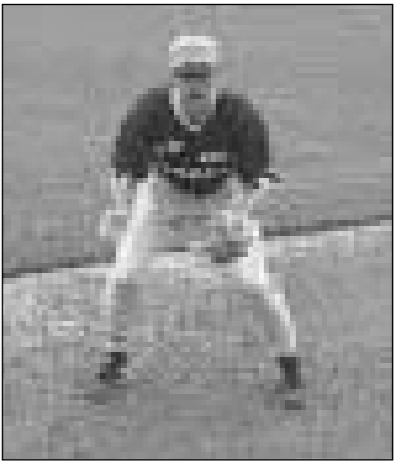
B. Pre-pitch Movement: Relax until the pitcher starts his windup. To initiate pre-pitch movement, walk into the ready position with a small, right-left step, and a controlled hop step if right handed. And a left-right step and a controlled hop step if left-handed. The pre-pitch movement should be initiated during the windup and completed as the ball is entering the hitting zone. The feet must be on the ground with the weight on the balls of the feet and inside the knees, when the ball enters the hitting zone. The only forward movement is the first two walking steps; the controlled hop step at the end is a vertical up and down. Continued movement forward will hinder lateral movement. Proper pre-pitch movement, timed correctly, allows for the best reaction to a hit ball. **(pictures 4-2 to 4-4)**



4-2: Relaxed



4-3: Short step



4-4: Ready position

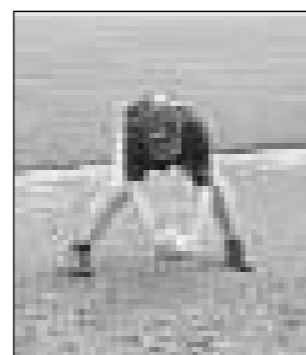


C. Approaching the Ball: Read the hops and move the feet smoothly with rhythm to get a good hop. Never straighten up completely when going after a ground ball. Stay athletic, balanced and approach the ball under control with the weight on the balls of the feet. Attempt to get in front of the ball and create a line toward the target to first base whenever possible. The last two steps should be right-left for right-handed throwers and left-right for left-handed throwers. The glove is extended out early before the player sets up to field the ball. A quiet open glove is lowered smoothly, opposed to flipping the glove down at the last moment (**refer to picture 4-7**). The glove continues down to get below the ball as the ball approaches. The ball is centered in the middle of the chest.



4-5: Fielding position

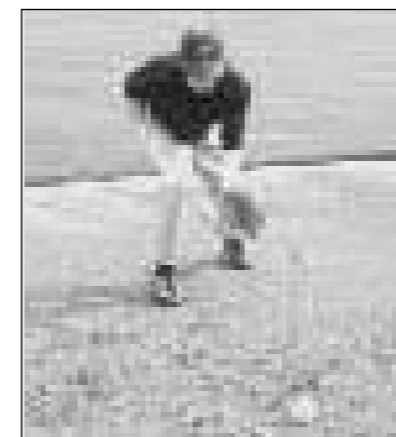
D. Fielding the Ball: Proper fielding position has the left foot slightly in front of the right for right-handed throwers and vice-versa for left-handed throwers. The feet should be spread about two times shoulder width, balanced with weight inside the knees. Knees are bent, rear down, flat back, head down, and hands extended away from the body out past the bill of their cap. Maintain a slight flex in the elbows. The hands should be relaxed and ready to react. Put the fingers of the glove on the ground with palm open to the ball, the throwing hand next to the glove as seen in the picture. When the ball has taken its last hop, you adjust the position of the glove to the ball. Fielding low to high, push the hands softly through the ball on a short hop or give softly back toward the body when fielding a ball at the down portion of the hop. A rolling ball can be fielded either way: whichever comes naturally to the fielder. Fielding forward through a ball keeps the body in position toward the target. (**picture 4-5**)



4-6: Securing the ball

E. Securing the Ball: Keep the head down and watch the ball into the glove. The throwing hand reaches in once the ball makes contact with the glove, to secure the ball and establishes a grip on a seam. For advanced 10-year-old players and older, a cross-seam grip should be secured on routine plays and on other plays whenever possible. (**picture 4-6**)

F. Throwing the Ball: Gather the ball after fielding it to the chest region. Look for the target and have the feet begin to square to the target. For right-handers, the right foot steps in front of the left, gaining momentum and direction toward the target. For left-handers it would be the opposite. Or the feet can shuffle forward, replacing the front foot with the back, to achieve direction and momentum. In both cases, the front shoulder points at the target as the feet move. Infielders should remain in an athletic position during this transition. Do not straighten up completely. Utilize the legs' momentum to throw the ball. Hands break to throw when the back foot lands to square up to target. Refer to arm action in throwing section. Note: Arm action does not change. A quicker snap-like throw will be used at times on different plays and when time doesn't permit normal arm action. (**picture 4-7 to 4-11**)



4-7: Final approach



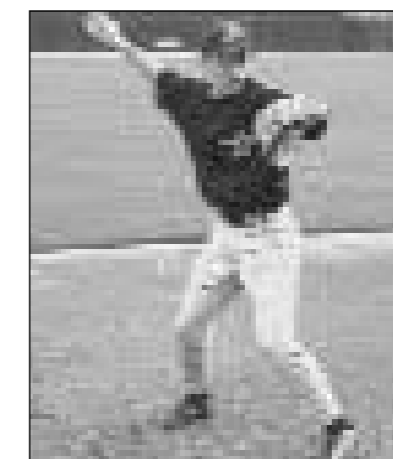
4-8: Fielding position



4-9: Secure ball



4-10: Gain momentum and square up



4-11: Throw



READY POSITION DRILLS

1. Ready Position Dry Drill: Line up all players. On verbal command, *ready*, position players get into the ready position. Check each player's position. Look for a balanced athletic stance with weight inside the knees and on the balls of feet. Hands are carried below the belt and aren't touching the knees. **Physically make corrections where needed.**

Recommended ages 6-10.

2. Pre-pitch Movement Dry Drill: Line up players arm-distance apart and put a coach to act as the pitcher on the mound. Players stand relaxed at their infield position. Pitcher or coach simulates windup, and when the pitcher reaches the release point, all players should start their pre-pitch movement and be in the ready position as the ball enters the hitting zone. One coach should monitor the players performing this drill. Make sure there is not too much momentum going forward, because that will hinder lateral movement. **This drill will show players when to relax and when to be ready to react. The drill keeps all players active.**

Recommended ages 10-16.

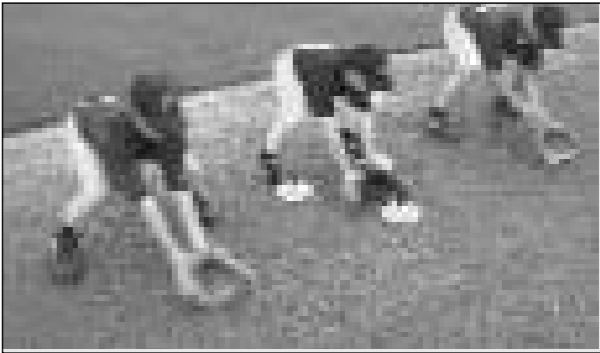
Expert Advice on Ready Positions

Remember, when the infield is playing in on the grass, it is important for the infielders to start low with their gloves out and open and lower to the ground. If they remain higher with their gloves out of position, a hard smash will be past them before they can lower their gloves to the ball. Third basemen along with first basemen coming off the bag should utilize this position routinely.



FIELDING POSITION DRY DRILLS

3. Triangle Dry Drill: Line up all players and draw a triangle in front of each one. Size it to the proportion of the player, with the triangle's base closest to them. The base of the triangle should be roughly two times the shoulder width. Have all players step forward and place their feet on the base of their triangle. Then players extend their glove hand in front of their body almost to full extension, keeping a slight flex in the elbow. Their fingertips should be pointed toward the ground. Bending at the knees, players place the tip of their glove on the ground at the point of the triangle. The point of the triangle should be out past the bill of the player's cap.



4-12: Triangle position

This drill helps get the young player into the proper fielding position by using the visual and reference points of the triangle. Players can remember the fielding position better because they remember the triangle position. (Picture 4-12)

Recommended ages 6-10.

4. Fielding Dry Drill: Line up all players. Players start relaxed. On verbal command, *ready position*, players get into their ready position. On verbal command, *triangle position*, players get into their fielding position. Check each player's fielding position. Their feet should be spread about two times shoulder width, with the knees flexed and the rear down. The head is down and the glove should be positioned on the ground out front past their cap. This drill checks proper fielding position. Watch for players bending at waist instead of properly spreading their feet farther apart and bending at knees to lower their hands, body and head.

Recommended ages 8-16.



CONTROLLED REACTION DRILLS

These next four drills (5-8) are perfect for performing one right after the other as a solid routine to set the tone for your fielding practices. Do these before you move to hitting balls and other drills.

- 5. Coach or Partner Rolls:** For those 10 years and under, line up players and have coach roll balls. For advanced 10-year-olds and above, pair up and have players roll to each other. Put them in two separate lines, 12 feet apart, and facing each other. Have adequate spacing between groups. Give each pair of players a ball. The receiving player starts in fielding position with the glove on the ground and extended out past the bill of their cap. The player with the ball rolls it underhand directly toward their partner's glove. Then the receiving player rolls it back the same way. As the drill progresses, players should vary the ball speed. We recommend the coach controls when players roll to each other by saying, *roll*. This drill can be taken a step further by working the feet, arm action and proper grip into the throwing position. **This drill works on the players' hands and fielding the ball out in front of their eyes in a sound fielding position. Provides a lot of repetitions in a short time and keeps all players active.** (picture 4-13)



4-13: Partner rolls and short hop drill

- 6. Short-hop Drill:** Set up the same as previous drill. The only difference is the player or coach attempts to give his partner a short hop. The goal is to toss the ball just short of where the player's glove is set up in the triangle position. Then the receiving player tosses it back the same way. The correct way to catch the short hop is to reach and catch it before it becomes an in-between hop by pushing the hands softly through the ball. We recommend the coach controls when players roll to each other. **This drill works on the players' hands and promotes a slight forward action with the glove hand to get those potentially difficult hops. Provides a lot of repetitions in a short time and keeps all players active.**

Recommended ages 8-16.

- 7. Backhand Drill:** Set up the same as previous drill. On coach's verbal command, *roll*, players roll ball to their partner. When first teaching the backhand position, have players get pre-set in the backhand position before the ball is rolled. Check their body and glove positions and make adjustments where needed. Proper body position is shown in picture. Coaches should emphasize that players need to bend their knees to get low to the ground on the backhand. Glove hand is slightly in front of glove-side foot and rotated open to the incoming ball. Once the players are set, roll five or so balls as they stay set in that position. After players understand and feel the proper position, it's time to start players from a ready position. With players in ready position, partners or coach rolls ball underhanded one step to their partner's backhand side. Receiving players start in their ready position and use a crossover step to position themselves for the backhand. The glove should cross over with their glove-hand foot. **Drill works on proper body and glove position on backhand play. The drill keeps all players active. Drill gives lots of repetitions on a play that is common but is not often worked on.** (picture 4-14)

Recommended ages 8-16.



4-14: Crossover backhand

- 8. Glove Side Drill:** Set up the same as in the previous drill. The only difference is that the player or coach throws a ball outside the glove hand. Then the receiving player tosses it back the same way. The correct way to catch the ball outside the body depends how deep it is outside of you. If it is deep, you may give a little more with the glove hand and body to reach the ball. If it is not as deep, you may be able to catch it outside and in front of the lead leg with a forward action. These ball needs to be rolled faster or even throw as a big hop to make the ball outside the body. **This drill works on the players' hands and catching those balls one can't quite get in front of. On balls outside the glove-hand side, carry the glove low and open to the ball. This drill provides a lot of repetitions in a short time and keeps all players active.**

Recommended ages 8-16.

- 9. Crossover Step Drill:** Place all players in a single-file line at shortstop except for the first baseman. The coach positions himself halfway between shortstop and home plate to maximize repetitions. Fielders start in the ready position and the coach rolls balls at medium speed to the player's right. The player breaks for the ball using the crossover step – the right foot pivots open, and the left foot crosses over in front of right foot. A slight angle should be taken to have more time to gain ground on the ball. Player field's ball sets and throws to first. After all players go once, throw balls to the players' left and watch for proper crossover step moving left. Then proceed to throwing balls to both side and watch the reaction. Encourage players to be quick with their feet during this drill. Challenge the players with the throws, extending their range, but make most plays reachable. **Drill works on crossover step and emphasizes quick feet when moving to a ground ball.**

Recommended ages 8-16.

- 10. Partner Ground Balls:** Pair up all players. Put them into two separate lines, 25 to 45 feet apart facing each other. Give each pair of players a ball. Start the balls all in one line. The receiving players assume the ready position. Players throw the ball back and forth as follows: On coach's verbal command, *throw*, players throw grounders at medium speed to their partners. The receiving players work on approaching and fielding the ball correctly. Emphasize the smooth, controlled movement players should have when approaching and fielding a ground ball. Also concentrate on players fielding the ball in the center of the body. This drill can be done to emphasize many different aspects of fielding. Coach can have players roll balls to the backhand side to work on the backhand. Coach can have players roll balls back and forth not emphasizing any particular phase of fielding, but just for lots of repetitions of ground ball practice. Coach can pick focus needed for your players. **This drill keeps all players active. Good drill to use before games to get players ready to play.**

Recommended ages 6-16.

Expert Advice on Fielding a Ball Hit Hard Right at You

It is much harder to read the speed and hops of a ball hit hard at you. Remember: do not come up and tense up. Try to soften the body and relax the hands, stay low to the ball and catch it first. You will have time to gather and throw after you have made the difficult catch.



- 11. Triangle Rotation Drill:** Position players at the three points of a triangle 25 to 60 feet apart, depending on the age group. Point A of the triangle is the roller. Point B of the triangle is the fielder. **(picture 4-15)** Point C of the triangle is the first baseman. The player at Point A starts the drill by rolling a ground ball to the fielder. After the player rolls the ball, he follows the roll and gets in line at the fielders position. The fielder fields the ground ball and throws it to the first baseman, then follows the throw and gets in line with the first baseman. The first baseman catches the ball and immediately throws it back to the roller, then follows his throw, going to the rollers position. Wherever the player throws or rolls the ball, he runs and takes position at that point for his next turn. For players 10 years and younger, don't have the players follow their throw but rather stay put and get back in the same line. After a couple of minutes have the whole groups rotate. Put a base down at each point of the triangle to keep the triangle from shrinking. First base position should work on footwork receiving a throw. The roller position should straddle the base and work on a quick tag when the ball is thrown to him, before he rolls it to the fielder. This drill can be done with a four players at each point with just one coach, but if there are two coaches, break the team into two triangles for more repetitions. **This high-activity drill works on fielding, throwing, first base footwork and tagging. It provides lots of repetitions in a short time.**



4-15: Triangle rotation drill



Recommended ages 8-16.

GAME SPEED DRILLS

- 12. Live Fungo Drill:** Put players at the shortstop position with no more than four players deep. Have a coach hit ground ball to the players and throw the ball to a first baseman. Start off hitting routine, medium-speed balls straight to the players. The key is you want the players to have time to read the hops and get their body in position to catch the ball correctly. Make sure when the players move to the ball they allow time to get under control and catch the ball in the Triangle Position. Then progress to hitting ball to their right where they have to get around the ball to be in a position to throw to first base. Move on to hitting balls to the player's left, making sure they don't overrun the ball. The last two types of ball for the better 10 year olds and above are the backhand play and slow roller. This drill can be done from any position on the field. Avoid more than four players in one line; there will be much standing and waiting for their turn. The majority of the balls should be hit medium speed so the player can get repetition on routine game-speed balls.



Recommended ages 7-16.

- 13. Concentrated Ground Balls:** Put as many players at their positions as you have fungo hitters. All fungo hitters hit ground balls to their respective fielders. Fielders toss balls back into coach or throw to coach's catcher. The coach's catcher should stand in front of the coach so that the coach has vision of him at all times. Never have them behind the coach where they can get hit by the coach's back swing. This drill is for fielding practice at game speed. **Good drill when you want a lot of ground balls in a short time and players arms are tired and do not need to throw.**

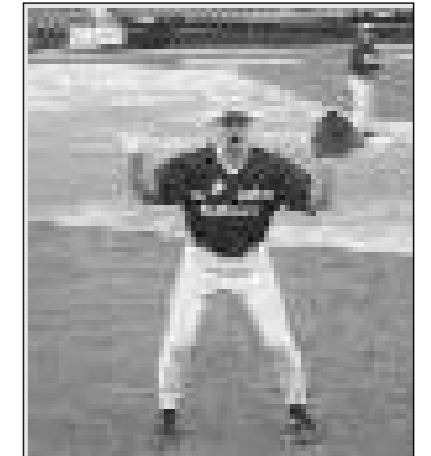


Recommended ages 10-16.

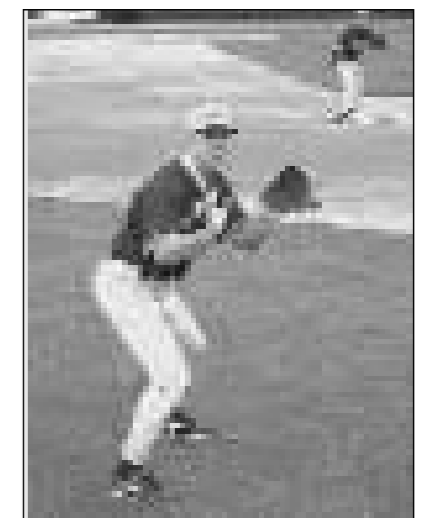


RELAY DRILLS

- 15. Relay Drill:** Break the team into two groups with one group at third base and the other group at a relay distance away acting as the relay men. The coach acts as an outfielder beyond the relay man. One player at a time from the relay group pops out and gives a target with hands raised to the coach. The third baseman should be lining up the relay man with the outfielder and third base. The coach varies different types of throws to the relay man. Make perfect throws to start then vary them – low, high, left, right and one-hoppers. The key is for the relay person to move his feet and get his body in position to catch the ball on the glove-hand side. For more advanced players, the relay person should turn sideways and shuffle through as the ball is caught to gain momentum and quickly transfer the ball. The ball is then relayed to third base, where the player makes the tag. Then the ball is thrown back to the relay person, and he relays it back to the coach. Two new players fill their spots, or have the same player stay for several throws in a row. This drill is nice because the coach controls the throw and can challenge the players. On a low throw the relay man cannot reach in time to get momentum moving toward his next throw, the relay man should back up and receive the throw on a big hop. This will give the relay man more momentum on his throw to base. **This drill teaches relay men how to position themselves and the importance of moving their feet to get into position. (pictures 4-16 & 4-17)**



4-16: Target position



4-17: Receiving the throw

- 16. Relay Communication Drill:** This drill is set up to simulate a relay play from the outfield to third base with focus on communication. Set a player or a group of players in center field, second base, shortstop and third base positions. Hit or throw balls to the outfielder, who will throw it to the relay man. Infielders start in regular position and once ball is hit second baseman goes and cover second base. Shortstop lines himself up to third base with third baseman help. Third baseman covers third and his verbal command to help line up the shortstop is *right, left, or good*. Once the throw is made the third baseman's verbal communication to the shortstop is *go, go*, if he doesn't want it cut. If he wants the ball directed to a base, his communication is *two, two* (for second) or *three, three* (for third). If there is no play and he wants the ball cut and held, the command is *cut, cut*. Once each player has gone a few times, have them rotate to the next position. Outfielder goes to second, second to shortstop, shortstop to third and third to the outfield. **This drill helps the players to communicate and to make a decision in a game setting. Getting players to speak up and make a decision can be tough, but the more you do drills like this the better they will be at reading a situation and communicate what needs to be done.**

Recommended ages 10-16.



TAG DRILLS

17. Tag Drill: Start players at second base and shortstop positions and have player line up behind the second-base cone. The coach should set up between second base and the pitchers mound. Have first player in line break to cover second base on coach's verbal command, *go*. Player hustles to second base and straddles the base and gets down low in a receiving position. Then on coach's command, *tag*, player applies a tag in front of the bag where the incoming runner will slide. Either a two-handed or one-handed tag is applied depending on age and ability. They then run over and line up at shortstop. Rotate all players through this dry drill sequence and make adjustments on player's positioning as needed. Then proceed to doing it live with a baseball. Coach should vary his throws to simulate all types of possible balls: from throws right on the money to short hops, high throws and balls that pull the receiver off the bag. On all these different throws, a tag still needs to be made in the correct position. This drill can be made into a game by awarding five points for getting in the correct receiving position and then another five points if they tag in the correct place. If all players get ten points each then the coach does five push ups. **This is a high-activity drill that teaches the correct tag position. Don't allow players to tag on top of the base and teach them to get down low and to keep their nose in there to make a good tag. (pictures 4-18 & 4-19)**



4-18: One-hand tag



4-19: Two-handed tag

18. Four-base Tag Drill: Position one player at each base, or in a square 45 to 90 feet apart depending on the age group. Players should straddle the base. The player at home starts the drill by throwing the ball to third. As the player receives the ball, he makes a quick tag with the back of the glove. After making the tag, the player quickly crow hops and throws to second base. The procedure is repeated at each base in sequence until the ball has gone around the bases three times. The quickest tag is a one-handed tag, going directly down in front of the base. A key to a quick tag is to let the ball travel to the fielder. Reaching out to catch the throw is not recommended unless the throw is off line. The ball can travel faster than a player's tag. Two-handed tags in a game are good when a player has plenty of time to put the tag down. This will help secure the ball so it will not be kicked out of the glove.



Recommended ages 10-16.

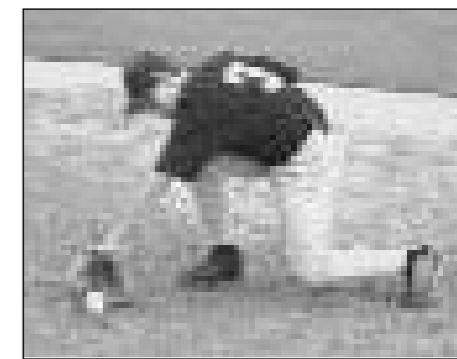
ADDITIONAL BACK HAND DRILLS

19. Backhand Reaction Play: This backhand is used on a sharply hit ball when the defender has no time to backhand the ball with the crossover step. This backhand is initiated by a slight drop step with the throwing hand foot as the body and glove stays low. As the ball is received, it is done so with a giving action towards the outfield. Players throw a one hop ball to backhand side and receive it as stated above. **(picture 4-20)**

Recommended ages 12-16.

20. Backhand Slide Through: This backhand is used when the infielder can't get in front of the ball or when a fast runner is involved. The infielder takes an angle to the ball and sets up for a backhand. The player still has time to move up to the ball so he shuffles forward sideways through the backhand play. The glove starts low with the thumb turned down to open up the glove. The slide forward starts with the glove hand moving forward to catch the ball. The body slides through a split second after the glove and continues into the throwing process. **(picture 4-21)**

Recommended ages 12-16.



4-20: Reaction backhand



4-21: Slide through backhand

GAMES

1. Short-hop Game: Set up the short-hop drill with each coach taking five players. Players do not team up but take turns playing with the coach. Coach throws 10 short hops to each player. The object of game is to see which player can catch the most throws. To keep other players active in the group, have them pair up and play until it is their turn. Another option for this game is as follows: Instead of best of 10, see what player can catch the most throws in a row. Winning player or players lead stretch at next practice. **If playing for most catches in a row, keep track of the winning amount at that day. At next practice, see who can beat last practice's record.**

Recommended ages 8-16.

2. Reaction Game: Set up the same as Game 1. The coach throws every type of ball possible – from all types of ground balls to line drives and balls that require jumping catches – and the player reacts to make the play. **This is great drill for all infielders, especially corner players.**


Recommended ages 8-16.

3. Partner Ground Ball Game: Set up Partner Ground Ball Drill, pairing up partners by ability. The coach doesn't have to control the game like the drill. The partners play against each other. The object of the game is to see which partner misses a ground ball first. Here are the rules: Players must throw the ground balls directly at their partner, and all throws must bounce at least two times. Players can throw ground balls as hard as they want to make the game a challenge. **Have players play a best-of-five series, or a best-of-seven World Series. This will give them a chance to lose a game but still possibly win the series.**


Recommended ages 8-16.



4. **Relay Game:** Divide the team into three groups of four to six players each. Each group forms a straight line with 25 to 50 feet of space between each player, depending on the age group. Have players at the same points throughout each line. Give a ball to each player at the beginning of each line. The object of the game is to throw the ball to each player in his line. Once the ball reaches the last player in the line, they return the ball back down the line until it reaches the player who started the game. The players at the ends of the line rotate to the middle after each game. If a player is overthrown, the ball must be returned to that player before the ball can continue down the line. Every player in the line must handle the ball. The first group to throw the ball up and back three times is the winner. Winning players get to decide what drill or game to perform next. **The game is designed to work on the proper fundamentals of an infielder being a relay man. Each infielder should face the player throwing to him with his arms raised high in the air, giving the thrower, the outfielder, a target. As the ball is in flight, the infielder should move to the ball, positioning his body to receive the throw on the glove-hand side. Once the ball is caught, the player crow hops directly toward his target, the next player in line. This game is great for teaching players the quickest way to relay a throw and keeps all players active.**



Recommended ages 8-16.
5. **Concentrated Ground Ball Game:** Set up drill as stated in drill section. Play the line of players versus the coach. Set a total number of catches that must be made consecutively for a player’s victory. If any player bobbles or misses a ball before reaching that total number, the coach wins. **Be sure to put a reward for the winners or a task to be performe by the losers to add to the build-up and competition of the game. Example, if players lose they must carry the coaches’ gear to the car.**



Recommended ages 8-16.
6. **Create Your Own:** Almost every drill can be made into a game. Be creative. After utilizing a drill for a while, see if you can make it a competition or a game. **The Triangle Rotation Drill and the Four-corner Tag Drill are perfect for making up your own game.**




Playing First Base


Developing a good first baseman is crucial to the success of a strong defensive team. Time should be spent on specific first-base fundamentals before, during or after practice. Most players want to play first base—or their parents want them to. But be aware that not all players have the ability to play this position. Remember to think of safety first. If a player has trouble catching a ball and can’t get out of the way of a hard throw, then they shouldn’t be playing first base. All infielders can benefit from learning how to receive a throw like a first baseman does. They will use this footwork on force outs at their respective bases.

FIRST BASE FUNDAMENTALS

- A. **Setting Up on Base:** Once the ball is hit, the first baseman should get to the base as quickly as possible. There are two ways a first baseman can set up his feet. The easier position is to place the ball of the throwing-hand foot in contact with the middle of the bag. The glove-hand foot is wider than shoulder width, and both knees are flexed. The first baseman faces the infielder making the play. It is important the first baseman is in a balanced athletic position so he can adjust to a bad throw. The second and more advanced foot position on receiving throws allows the first baseman more mobility around the bag, but there is more footwork involved. When the first baseman gets to the bag using this method, he straddles the bag with his heels in contact with the base. From there, the technique is the same. **(picture 4-22)**



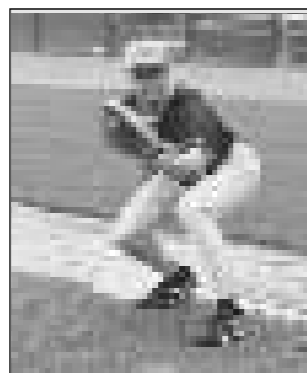
4-22: Straddle set up
- B. **Receiving the Throw:** From the athletic position and facing the infielder making the play, the first baseman waits to see the flight of the ball. After seeing the throw direction, he steps with the glove-hand foot directly toward the throw. From the more advanced straddle position, the fielder has to adjust his throwing-hand foot in contact with the base as he steps toward the throw. This technique allows for movement on the base. On very wide throws, a first baseman can shift his feet to one side of the bag and then stretch for the ball. This is where mobility around the base is gained. It’s important on low throws that the first baseman bends his back knee to maintain his foot on the base. Once the ball is caught players, should pull their foot off the base to limit getting stepped on and look for the next play if other men are on base. **(picture 4-23)**



4-23: Step to ball



- C. Holding Runners on Base:** Whether right- or left-handed, the basic body position is about the same. The right foot is parallel and against first base on the home plate side. The left foot is in line with pitcher. Knees are bent low and the target is given with the glove hand extended toward the pitcher. Left-handers have their left foot more open in line with the first-base line. Once pitcher commits to home, first baseman shuffles off base and gets into ready position. (pictures 4-24 & 4-25)



4-24: Holding runners



4-25: Ready position

FIRST BASE DRILLS

- 1. Receiving Throws:** Start player at regular first baseman's position. Coach sets up 40 to 60 feet away with a bucket of balls. On coach's command, *go*, player breaks to the base, gets under control and sets up on the bag correctly with either set up. The first baseman then faces toward coach's location and waits to see where the ball is thrown. After reading the ball direction the first baseman steps to meet the throw with the glove-hand foot, or shifts both feet if using the straddle technique. Once catch and out is made, pull foot off bag and look for another play. Have another bucket placed near first to drop the balls into. The coach should vary the location and height of throws. When working with younger players who have limited first-base experience, set up much closer—about 20 feet away.

Recommended ages 8-16.

- 2. Receiving Bad Throws:** Set up the same as Drill 1, but the coach throws balls that can just barely be caught maintaining the base and throws where the player must come off the base to catch. This teaches the first baseman his stretching limit and that it's acceptable to come off the base and save an errant throw.

Recommended ages 8-16.

- 3. Tagging Runners:** Set up the same as Drill 1. Coach throws balls that are up the line (toward home) that the player must leave the base to catch. The first baseman catches the ball in fair territory. Once making the catch, keep the glove low in case the runner slides to avoid a tag. The tag should be made lightly, letting the runner's momentum force the tag. A tag with a giving action will help prevent injury by softening the contact. A coach can simulate a runner to make this more realistic. (pictures 4-26 & 4-27)

Recommended ages 10-16.



4-26: Start low



4-27: Give with runner

- 4. Picking Low Throws:** Coach starts 10 to 20 feet away from first base with a bucket of balls. Player starts in the stretch position with glove out front and low with the knee flexed in an L position to maintain contact with the base. The coach throws short hops and the player works on picking the throw and maintaining the bag. Have the player work on backhanded short hops as well. After a few throws from this distance, the coach should back up 40 to 60 feet away and the first baseman starts on the base in his regular receiving position. Now working on stretching out and picking the ball at the same time. The only time a first baseman shouldn't step to the ball on a low throw is when the throw is very short and the ball can't be picked on a short hop. The player stays back to catch the big hop. (picture 4-28)

Recommended ages 10-16.

- 5. Just React:** Combine all of the above and have the player just react to all the possible throws a first baseman may receive. For older players, a coach may use a fungo and hit balls as if thrown to a first baseman to save the arm and put more velocity on the ball.

Recommended ages 8-16.



4-28: Picking low throws

GAMES

- 1. Picking Low Throws:** After performing the drill for a while, end with a little competition. From 40 to 60 feet, put three players at first base. The players are playing against each other. Have players alternate taking throws. Players keep going in succession until they miss two throws. When they miss two they are out. Keep going until a winner is crowned. **Winning player gets to decide what fielding game the team plays at the next practice.**

Recommended ages 10-16.

