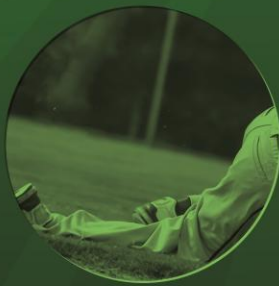




FIELDING FUNDAMENTALS



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Contents

THROWING AND CATCHING TECHNIQUES	3
DRILLS.....	4
Drill #1: Three-Part Throwing Drill	4
Drill #2: Five-Part Throwing Drill.....	6
Drill #3: Chop Steps Drill	8
Drill #4: Stop and Go Drill.....	10
Drill #5: Texas Leaguer Drill.....	11
Drill #6: Flip Drill.....	12
Drill #7: Short Hops Drill.....	13
Drill #8: Wall Drill	14

INTRODUCTION

It is vital that a player learn proper fielding techniques at a young age. Once bad habits are established, it can be very hard to reverse them. Players between the ages of 8-10 are at an ideal age to focus on correct mechanics.

In this eBook, we'll go through 8 fun and effective drills that focus on the basic fundamentals of throwing, catching, and fielding for all fielding positions. You can perform these drills as part of a team practice, during individual or small group workouts, or in the back yard at home.

If you'd like to see all these drills performed live with step by step video instructions, you can upgrade to include the Ultimate Fielding Drills Online Video Clinic by going here:

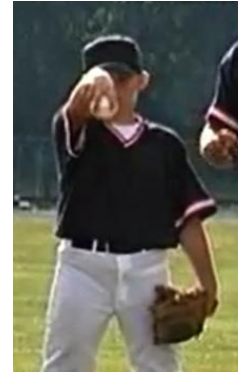
<http://baseball-practice-plans.com/p/upgrade-fielding>

THROWING AND CATCHING TECHNIQUES

Always warm-up properly before beginning any baseball drills. Players **MUST** warm-up to throw, not throw to warm-up. Taking the time to go through a comprehensive stretching program will protect the muscles of the player's throwing arm.

Throwing

- Always use a "4-Seam Grip" across the stitches with fingers on top of the ball.
- Infielders should use a "Short Arm Circle" – never dropping the arms below the waist and keeping the elbows down when throwing.
- This gives the player the chance to gain a little bit of arm velocity while still making a nice, rapid throw.



4-Seam Grip

Receiving

- Always show your partner a "Target Box." Arms at 90 degree angles with hands to each side of the head. This gives him a target to aim for during a throwing drill.
- Keep your knees bent and your feet spread.



Target Box for receiving a throw

- Be ready for a poor throw by sliding your feet to the side, ensuring that you are always in front of the ball.
- Always trap the ball in the glove with TWO HANDS. If the ball is above the waist, bring the thumbs together to trap it in the glove. If the ball is below the waist, bring the pinkies together.

The more often the correct technique is practiced, the sooner it will become a good habit. Demand that your players use perfect technique during warm-ups and practice situations so those skills will carry seamlessly into game time situations.

DRILLS FOR FIELDING FUNDAMENTALS

Drills are an excellent way to break down the basic fundamentals of fielding. They help build game skills and hone a player's technique. Drills also help set a good tempo for the rest of practice or an upcoming game.

Drill #1: Three-Part Throwing Drill

Complete 10 repetitions

Purpose: This drill allows players to isolate the different parts of their throwing technique so they can identify any problems that need to be corrected. It also aids in the development of speed and accuracy.

Going from the Break Position to a throw allows the player to isolate and focus on the glove tuck. A proper glove tuck can give a player an extra 2-4 mph on their throw.

Setup: This drill can be performed anywhere on the field with the coach standing near the player to call commands.

Another player should act as the catcher and return the ball to the practicing player after each repetition. A ball and glove are required.

Execution:**Part 1: Break Position to Throw**

1. *The coach calls "Break" and the player holds a break position.*

Break Position:

- Arms out straight and flexed.
- Feet shoulder width apart.
- Fingers on top of the ball with a 4-seam grip.
- Glove is facing away from player and pointing directly at his partner for better accuracy.

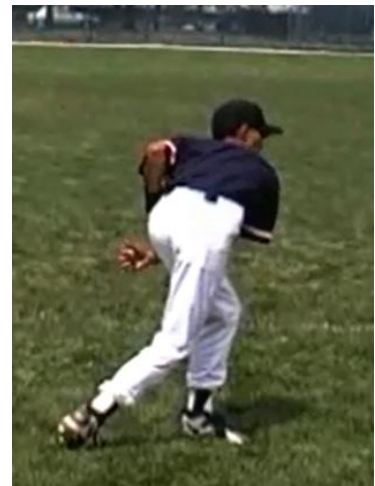


Break or Scarecrow Position

2. *After a pause the coach calls "Throw" and the player throws the ball while focusing on tucking his glove.*

Throwing:

- Release the ball.
- Form a 90 degree angle in the arm.
- Bring the glove back to the chest.
- Follow through.
- Tuck the glove.



Follow Through and Glove Tuck

3. *Repeat the BREAK and THROW calls until the player has mastered the sequence and is ready to move on to part two.*

Part 2: Ready Position to Break to Throw

The coach calls "Ready" and the player holds the ready position.

Ready Position:

- Hands in front of chest.
- Feet shoulder width apart.

1. *After a pause the coach calls "Break" and the player takes a small step with his front foot and splits his hands into the break position.*
2. *After another pause the coach calls "Throw" and the player throws the ball.*

3. Repeat the READY, BREAK, THROW calls until the player has mastered the sequence and is ready to move on to part 3.

Part 3: Ready Position to Throw

The final part of this drill combines steps 1 and 2 into one fluid motion where the player completes the throw without any pauses.

1. The coach calls "Ready" and the player stands in a ready position.
2. After a pause the coach calls "Throw" and the player seamlessly moves from the ready position through the break position and into a throw without pausing.
3. Repeat the READY and THROW calls until the player can move through all of the movements fluidly and accurately.



Ready Position

Coaching Tips:

- Watch for a strong glove tuck and follow through.
- Make sure each player is consistently using proper mechanics and form for every repetition of part 1 before moving on to part 2, and again to part 3.
- This drill can be performed by all positions at the same time. While the techniques may differ slightly between a catcher and an outfielder, for example, the drill itself never changes.

Drill #2: Five-Part Throwing Drill

Complete 15 repetitions

Purpose: This drill works on the skills needed to quickly and effectively field a ground ball. It breaks down five steps that help a player ensure controlled movements.

Setup: This drill can be performed anywhere on the field with the coach standing near the player to call commands. This drill is performed without a ball, but a glove is needed.

Execution:**Part 1: Creep Step**

1. The coach calls "Creep" and the player steps into a creep position.

Creep Position:

- Take a small step out with the right foot and then a small step out with the left foot.
- Feet are slightly wider than shoulder width apart.
- Keep hands open and ready.
- The player can move in any direction (left, right, forward, backward) without having to reposition himself.

Part 2: Charge the Ball

2. The coach calls "Charge" and the player charges the ball by taking a few steps forward quickly and with control.

Part 3: Breakdown

3. The coach calls "Breakdown" and the player moves into a position in which he begins to field the ball.

Breakdown Position:

- Feet are wider than shoulder width apart.
- Keep head down.
- The glove hand rests on the ground while the non-glove hand is hovering above.
- The arms are extended to meet the ball.



Breakdown Position

Part 4: Fielding Position

4. The coach calls "Field" and the player pulls into a fielding position.

Field Position:

- The player pulls the ball into his midsection, cradling the ball into his chest.
- Head stays down.



Field Position

Part 5: Throw

5. *The coach calls "Throw" and the player stands up and throws.*

Throwing Position:

- Steps with the right foot inside of the left.
- Squares shoulders, hips and knees toward target.
- Releases a strong throw.

Coaching Tips:

- This drill can be done with any number of players at the same time.
- Line them up and watch for proper form and mechanics as you call *Creep, Charge, Breakdown, Field, and Throw*.
- Most little league and high school situations require a player to charge the ball so this is an important step (part 2) to master.
- Emphasize the importance of holding the non-glove hand above the glove during the Field Position (part 4). This is sometimes called the "Alligator Ball Trap" because it will help a player "trap" the ball into his glove even if it comes at him with a bad hop. Many young players involuntarily flinch away as the ball comes at them for fear they will be hit in the face. The non-glove hand acts to trap and protect the player's face.

Drill #3: Chop Steps Drill

Complete 5 repetitions in each direction

Purpose: This drill focuses on eliminating any extra steps taken while fielding. For both outfielders and infielders, any extra step taken while fielding the ball gives the baserunner an average of two more steps.

For a high school baserunner, two extra steps is approximately six extra feet or one full second!

Setup: This drill can be performed anywhere on the field with the coach standing in front of the players to call commands and directions.

Any number of players can participate. No ball is needed for this drill.



Players in the Creep Position

Execution:

1. The coach calls "Creep" and the players assume the creep position with their feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart.
2. The coach calls "Chop" and the players quickly move their feet while in the Creep position.
3. The coach signals a direction with his hand. (Either RIGHT, LEFT, FORWARD, BACKWARD ANGLE LEFT, BACKWARD ANGLE RIGHT)
4. The players use a cross-over step in the direction indicated by the coach, take about three quick steps, and move into the breakdown position with heads down and open gloves.



Players Holding a Break Position to the Right

Coaching Tips:

- Emphasize the importance of keeping their feet moving (chop steps) so they are prepared to quickly move in any direction the ball may be hit.
- The footwork and technique remains the same for all age groups.
- This is a great drill to start practice with as it reminds players how to move to the ball.

Drill #4: Stop and Go Drill

Complete 20 repetitions

Purpose: This drill focuses on the proper technique needed to field a ground ball. Players are also working on balance and mechanics throughout this drill.

Setup: This drill can be performed anywhere on the field. Have players form a line with the coach facing them. He should be approximately 15 yards away, or enough room to roll the player a ground ball. If you have an assistant coach or other helpers, run this drill with two or three lines of players. Every player should have a glove and every coach or helper should have a ball.



Execution:

1. The coach calls "Creep" and the player takes a few steps out of the line and assumes the Creep Position.
2. The coach rolls a ground ball to the player.
3. Once the player has fielded the ball, the coach calls "Stop."
4. The player holds the Field Position, with the ball tucked tightly into his chest and his head down.
5. After a pause the coach calls "Go" and the player is free to release the Field Position and throw the ball back.
6. The player then returns to the back of the line.

Coaching Tips:

- After you have called “Stop,” and the player is holding in a Field Position, inform him of any technical or mechanical changes that need to be corrected before calling “Go.”
- Remind players to always keep both arms extended to block the ball with the non-glove hand in case the ball has a bad hop.

Drill #5: Texas Leaguer Drill

Complete 15 repetitions

Purpose: This drill works on improving a player’s “foot quickness” when a ball is hit behind him. Focus on avoiding unnecessary steps in order to reach the ball as quickly as possible.

Setup: This drill can be performed anywhere on the field. The players should be lined up and waiting for their turn. A ball and gloves are needed.

Execution:

1. *The first player in line jogs to a position a short distance in front of the coach.*
2. *The coach throws the ball behind the player either to the right or left.*
3. *The player calls for the ball (“MINE, MINE, MINE”), hesitates long enough to see which direction the ball is going and drop steps in that direction to make the catch.*

- If the ball is thrown over his left shoulder he should drop step to the left for the catch. If the ball is thrown over his right shoulder he should drop step to the right and go with a backhand catch (if he is right-handed).



Player Fielding a Throw over His Left Shoulder

4. *The player throws the ball back to the coach and returns to the back of the line.*

Coaching Tips:

- Make sure every player is hesitating long enough to see which direction the ball is going before he takes a single step. This will help him get to the ball faster than if he accidentally starts to run the wrong way and has to correct his direction.
- As a player's skill increases, increase the distance of the thrown ball.

Drill #6: Flip Drill

Complete 25 repetitions

Purpose: This drill helps a fielder work on flipping the ball to a teammate from the Field Position.

Setup: This drill can be performed anywhere on the field or in a backyard. The players should be partnered up, standing approximately 20 feet away from each other. The drill can be practiced with mom, dad or a friend as well. A ball and glove are required.

Execution:

1. *The player starts from a Field position, crouched down with his glove on the ground and the ball in the glove.*
2. *The player calls "Flip" so the partner knows the ball is coming. He stands and flips the ball (underhand) to the chest of his partner.*
3. *When practicing backhanded flips, throw from the chest.*

Coaching Tips:

- This is a useful drill for every infielder.
- Run the drill several times changing the distance between partners. The more you shorten up the distance, the higher you will have to hang the ball for the partner to catch.

Drill #7: Short Hops Drill

Complete 25 repetitions

Purpose: This drill helps a fielder work on reaction time and accuracy with directional changes. It will help to train the body to react without having to think about it first.

Setup: This drill can be performed anywhere on the field or in a backyard. The players should be partnered up, standing approximately 20 feet away from each other. The drill can be practiced with mom, dad or a friend as well. A ball and glove are required.

Execution:

1. *The player stands in the Field Position always keeping his glove close to the ground.*
2. *The partner throws the ball to the player so that it hits the ground and bounces to the player.*
3. *The player fields the ball and flips it back to the partner.*
4. *Vary the difficulty of the throws (faster, slower, distance between where the balls hits and the player, etc.).*
5. *Work on forehand and backhand fielding.*



Fielding a short hop

Coaching Tips:

- Encourage players to perform these types of drills with family members or friends outside of practice time.

Drill #8: Wall Drill

Complete 25 repetitions

Purpose: This drill simulates fielding a short hop or a tough ground ball. It is an excellent drill for developing “hand quickness.” Keep it fast-paced and fun by turning it into a competition between teammates.

Setup: This drill can be performed against any wall where it is safe to bounce a ball (back of the dugout, school building, or other concrete wall). A ball and glove are needed. A “bouncier” ball will come off the wall faster.

Execution:

- 1. The player stands about 10 feet away from the wall in a low crouched position with his hands apart. (The closer the player is to the wall, the more quickly he will have to react.) The coach or partner is standing behind the player.*
- 2. The coach calls “Ball” before he throws the ball at the wall.*
- 3. The player slides to the right or the left to get in front of the ball and catch it. He cradles the ball into his body as he catches it.*
 - If the ball goes to the right, the player must use a backhand catch. If the ball goes to his left, the player will use a forehand catch.
- 4. The player turns and tosses the ball back to the coach.*



Wall Drill

Coaching Tips:

- Repetition in practice = perfection in games!
- Throw more challenging balls to players with more skill.
- This drill can be set up as a team competition by lining up the entire team against the wall. If a player drops a ball he is out. Play until there is only one player left.

These basic fundamental skills will set the strong foundation a player will need to be successful in baseball. Make sure even the youngest players use proper form and technique during every drill.

Repetition is the mother of all skill!

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