



PITCHER



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INTRODUCTION

Fielding for pitchers is one of the most important, yet often overlooked areas of pitching practice. Proper footwork, barehanded fielding, two-handed fielding and groundball fielding are all technical skills that need to be practiced regularly.

In this eBook, we'll go through 8 fun and effective pitcher fielding drills that you can perform as part of a team practice, for 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>

ARM & SHOULDER WARM-UPS

Always warm-up to throw, NEVER throw to warm-up! Before a player even picks up a baseball, he should complete a thorough warm-up and stretching routine. This will ensure the player's muscles are ready for the demands of drill work and practice.

Running is a great way to start practice. It warms the player's muscles slowly and effectively while getting their heartrate up at the same time. Have your players run with a baseball in their hands. It's a great opportunity for them to get a feel for the ball and work on the 4-seam grip.

The following nine stretches should be performed after a short run. Hold each stretch for 30-60 seconds and always stretch both sides of the body.

1. Rotator Cuff Stretch

- Stand tall with a straight back and neck.
- Bring the right arm across the chest.
- Hold the back of the right elbow with the left hand.
- Gently pull with the left hand.
- Switch arms.



Rotator Cuff Stretch

See these drills on video --> <http://baseball-practice-plans.com/p/upgrade-fielding>

This stretch works the rotator cuff and is especially important for a player's throwing arm.

2. Tricep Stretch

- Stand tall with a straight back. The head can be angled slightly forward.
- Place the right elbow behind the head.
- Hold the right elbow with the left hand.
- Gently pull the arm down with the left hand.
- Switch arms.



Tricep Stretch

3. Forearm Stretch

- Stand tall with a straight back and neck.
- Extend arm out straight with the palm facing out and fingers extended up.
- Use other hand to gently pull the fingers back.
- Turn the outstretched hand so that the palm remains out but the fingers are pointed down.
- Use the other hand to gently pull the fingers back.
- Switch arms.



Forearm Stretch- Fingers Up



Forearm Stretch- Fingers Down

4. Neck Stretch

- Bring the right arm behind the back.
- Gently pull the right wrist with the left hand.
- Tilt the head to the left.
- Repeat on the other side.



Neck Stretch

5. Back and Torso Stretch

- Place feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart.
- Turn the torso and place the right elbow to the outside of the left knee.
- Place the left hand on the left hip.



Back and Torso Stretch

This stretch also works the lower hamstring and simulates the Finishing Position in mechanical movement.

6. Resistance Stretch

Pressing Down

- Hold one arm up in a 90 degree angle with hand in a fist.
- The coach or partner will hold the fist offering mild resistance.
- Attempt to rotate the arm forward against the resistance.
- Switch sides.



Resistance Stretch- Pressing Down



Pulling Up

Pulling Up

- Hold one arm at 90 degree angle with the hand pointing toward the ground.
- The coach or partner will hold the hand offering mild resistance.
- Attempt to rotate the arm up against the resistance.
- Switch sides.

7. Flexibility Stretch

- Extend arms straight behind back.
- The coach or partner holds the hands and gently pulls the arms together.

This stretch is great for the pectoral muscles and overall arm and shoulder flexibility.



Flexibility Stretch

8. Pretzel Stretch

- Cross the right leg over the left with the right knee remaining bent.
- Place the left elbow outside of the right knee.
- Look behind the body.
- Switch sides.



Pretzel Stretch

This stretch pulls the legs and torso in opposite directions giving the body a “twisting” stretch.

9. Groin Stretch

Seated Stretch

- In a seated position, place the soles of the feet together.
- Grab the ankles and gently press the elbows down onto the inner thighs.



Groin Stretch- Seated

One of the most common preseason injuries is the groin injury. Proper groin stretching is vital to avoiding season-ending injuries.

10. Standing Stretch

- Stand with feet wider than shoulder width apart.
- Lean the body to the right and bend the right knee slightly.
- Rest the right hand on the right knee while



Groin Stretch- Standing

holding the stretch.

- Switch sides.

Stretching should always be pain-free. Overstretching will only cause muscle tears and injuries. Concentrate on breathing through each stretch. Every player's body is different and requires a different amount of stretching, but it is always best to stretch more rather than less.

Each player should develop his own personal warm-up and stretching routine. A dedicated player arrives to the field to complete his routine before practice begins.

FIELDING GROUND BALLS

Drill #1: Two-Handed Fielding

Complete 5-10 repetitions

Purpose: This drill emphasizes the proper body positioning and footwork a pitcher needs to field the ball and get the out at first base.

Setup: The players should be lined up behind the mound. The coach will be at home plate hitting balls to the players as they step up to the mound. A bat, balls and gloves are required.

Execution:

1. *The player on the mound simulates a pitch to the coach.*
 2. *The coach hits a ground ball to the player.*
 3. *The player assumes the Fielding Position by setting his feet and keeping his glove close to the ground.*
 - The player should charge the ball if it is hit softly.
 - The player's feet should always be spread so he is able to move in any direction quickly.
 4. *Once the player has made a controlled catch, he steps toward first base and simulates a throw.*
-

5. *The player returns to the end of the line.*



Player Simulating a Throw to the Coach



Player Fielding the Ball

Coaching Tips:

- Use a bat instead of rolling the ground ball to the player; this will accurately simulate an actual game situation.
- As a player's skill level develops, move the ball around for more difficult fielding.
- Remind players to keep the head down when fielding the ball. Pulling the head up will result in pulling the glove up, causing you to miss the ball.
- Eliminate both the pitch and the throw to first base to focus on a player's fielding technique.

Drill #2: Fielding Balls Down First and Third Baselines

Complete 3-5 repetitions to each side

Purpose: This drill emphasizes the proper body positioning and footwork a pitcher needs to field a non-moving ball at either the first or third baseline.

Setup: The players should be lined up behind the mound. Set three balls along the first base line and three balls along the third base line close to home. A teammate can be set up at first base to catch the ball. A bat, balls and gloves are required.

Execution:

First Base Technique

1. *The player on the mound simulates a pitch to the coach.*

2. *The coach calls either "First!" or "Third!"*

3. *The player runs to the balls placed at that baseline calling, "MINE, MINE, MINE!"*
4. *The player uses the Break Position and two hands to pick up the ball.*
 - Pushing the ball into the ground when picking it up is more effective than swiping at it.
 - Left-handed players: circle around the ball before squaring up to throw.
5. *The player quickly steps away from the line so he is out of the runner's path.*
6. *He takes one preparation step before throwing to first base.*



Player Fielding at the Third Baseline

Third Base Technique

1. *Follow the same instruction as above but the player should point his shoulders and feet toward first base before throwing.*
 - Left-handed players: can two-hand or bare hand the ball immediately.

Coaching Tips:

- Make sure the players are calling for the ball every time they field. This will ensure good communication with the catcher so both players don't rush the ball.
- Remind players to always use two hands to field the ball if they have time. This will result in a cleaner play. Use a bare hand as a last option.

Drill #3: Glove Only Fielding

Complete 5-10 repetitions

Purpose: This drill works on charging the ball and fielding it with a glove only. It is also known as the “glove shuffle” or the “bare hand scoop.” This isn’t a situation that happens often, but is a good skill for pitchers to learn.

Setup: The players should be lined up behind the mound. The coach will be at home plate hitting balls to the players as they step up to the mound. A bat, balls and gloves are required.

Execution:

1. *The player on the mound simulates a pitch to the coach.*
2. *The coach lightly hits a ground ball to the player.*
3. *The player quickly charges the ball, keeping his glove open and scoops up the ball with his glove.*
 - If the ball has stopped, use a barehanded flip.
4. *Keep the toss back to home plate level and soft with a “pushing” motion.*



Glove Only Flip



Barehanded Flip

Coaching Tips:

- Remind players to keep their heads down when scooping up the ball. Pulling the head up will cause the glove to pull up and loss of the ball.

Drill #4: Comebacker Technique

Complete 5-10 repetitions

Purpose: This drill works on “comebacks” to the pitcher and the proper footwork needed for turning a double play. This drill also helps a pitcher to determine who is going to cover the bag when returning a double play.

Setup: The players should be lined up behind the mound. The coach will be at home plate hitting balls to the players as they step up to the mound. A bat, balls and gloves are required.

Execution:

1. Review the following charts so the pitcher knows who is responsible for covering second, based on the direction of the comeback.



2. The player on the mound simulates a pitch to the coach.
3. The coach lightly hits a ground ball to the player rotating the ball to the player's right and left, or straight at him.
4. The player fields the ball with two hands, turning his body to the side to set up for a quicker throw.
5. The player steps and throws to second base.

Coaching Tips:

- It is important that the pitcher develops a communication system with his infielders.
- Younger players should field the ball straight on and then turn to throw.

- Run this drill, but have the pitcher check third base for a runner before throwing to 1st. He should be in full control of the ball before looking at third (only turning head, not whole body) and throwing for the out at first.

COVERING BASES

Drill #5: Covering First Base

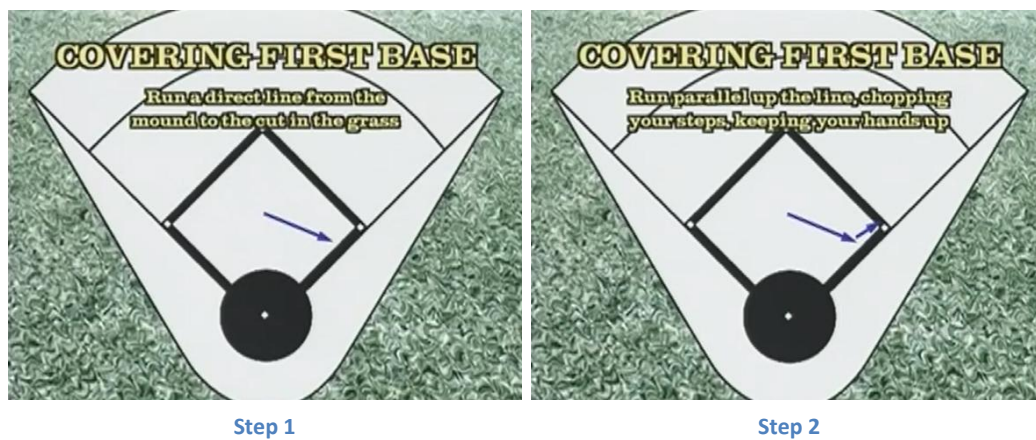
Complete 5-10 repetitions

Purpose: This drill is intended to simulate a game situation where the ball is hit to the right of the first baseman; therefore the pitcher must cover first base.

Setup: The players should be lined up behind the mound. The coach will be on the baseline between first and second throwing balls to the players. Balls and gloves are required.

Execution:

1. The player on the mound simulates a pitch.
2. The player runs a direct line from the mound to the cut in the grass.
3. He then runs parallel to the line using chop steps and keeping his hands up.
 - Always stay out of the path of the runner.



4. *The coach throws the ball to the player before he reaches first base.*
 - If a fielder bobbles the ball, the pitcher must set up like a first baseman by planting a foot on the base and waiting for the throw.
5. *The player throws the ball back to the coach and returns to the line.*

Coaching Tips:

- Remind players to tag the inside third of the bag.
- Always keep hands up to give the thrower a target.

Drill #6: Covering Second Base

Complete 5-10 repetitions

Purpose: This drill is intended to simulate a game situation where the pitcher can get a force out by covering second base.

Setup: The players should be lined up behind the mound. The coach will be in center field, behind second base, throwing balls to the players. Balls and gloves are required.

Execution:

1. *The player on the mound simulates a pitch.*
2. *The player runs a direct line from the mound to second base.*
3. *The player sets up like a fielder on the outside half of the plate for protection from the runner.*
4. *The coach throws the ball.*
5. *The player catches the ball.*
 - The player can continue the throw to first base for the double play.
6. *The player throws the ball back to the coach and returns to the line.*

Coaching Tips:

- Encourage pitchers to take an active role in fielding during EVERY play.

Drill #7: Covering Third Base

Complete 5-10 repetitions

Purpose: This drill is intended to simulate a game situation where a pop fly is sliced to third; therefore the pitcher must cover third base.

Setup: The players should be lined up behind the mound. The coach will be to the left of third base throwing balls to the players. Balls and gloves are required.

Execution:

1. *The player on the mound simulates a pitch.*
2. *The player runs a direct line from the mound to third base.*
3. *The player sets up on the outside of the plate to avoid the base runner.*
4. *The coach throws the ball.*
5. *The player catches the ball.*
6. *The player throws the ball back to the coach and returns to the line.*

Coaching Tips:

- Practice good communication and body positioning for a force out or tag out.
- Remind players to use the bag as defense from the runner.

Drill #8: Covering Home Plate

Complete 5-10 repetitions

Purpose: This drill is intended to simulate a game situation where the pitcher must cover home plate because the throw has gotten past the catcher.

Setup: The players should be lined up behind the mound. The coach will be behind home plate throwing balls to the players. Balls and gloves are required.

Execution:

1. *The player on the mound simulates a pitch.*
2. *The player runs a direct line from the mound to home base.*
3. *The player sets up either to the right, left, or behind home plate depending on where the throw is coming from.*
 - Do not get caught straddling the plate.
 - Always keep yourself in a safe position.
4. *The coach throws the ball rotating between different points behind home plate.*
5. *The player catches the ball and gets his glove completely on the ground for the tag.*
6. *The player throws the ball back to the coach and returns to the line.*

Coaching Tips:

- Have your pitcher practice for possible overthrows. The pitcher should cover home plate when the ball is hit to left field. Have him run from the mound to a position behind the catcher, deep enough to catch an overthrow.

Pitchers are very important in preventing runs and getting outs. Complete the recommended repetitions of each drill for a 45-60 minute workout that will prepare your pitchers for many key game situations.

Perfect practice makes perfect play!

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