



TEACHING FIELDING SKILLS

- INFIELD -

A majority of the fielding mistakes young players make are the result of improper fundamentals. Your role as a coach is to teach your players basic fielding techniques. With practice, all outfielders can improve their play. The first lesson to teach a player is to be mentally prepared for each play. All fielders should be thinking, "What do I do if the ball is hit to me?" and "What do I do if the ball isn't hit to me?" before the batter even comes to the plate.

INFIELDERS

1. As the pitcher goes into the wind-up, fielders need to be in the proper "ready" position – a well-balanced stance with the feet shoulder-width apart, weight evenly distributed on the balls of the feet, and a slight bend in the knees. The glove and throwing hand should be extended in front of the body at chest level.

2. When fielding grounders, fielders need to be aggressive and go after the ball. Their feet should continue to move as the ball is fielded.

3. Players should stay low when fielding the ball. They should have their butts down and backs parallel to the ground.

4. The ball should be fielded away from the player's body with two hands. Right handers should field the ball between the inside of the left foot and the middle of the body, while left handers should field the ball between the inside of the right foot and the middle of the body.

5. Players need to watch the ball. By keeping their heads down and eyes focused on the ball, players can track it all the way into their gloves.

6. Players should come out of their fielding position ready to throw. When throwing, they should hold the ball across the seams, aim for a specific target (i.e., the letters on a jersey), step toward that target and follow through. Players should allow their momentum to carry them toward the target after releasing the ball.

7. If a "hot" grounder is not playable, players should attempt to knock it down. Remember, players should be instructed not to turn their heads. Turning away will only increase the chance of injury.

8. On pop-ups, players should always use two hands to catch the ball. Also, they need to clearly communicate with the other fielders to avoid a collision.

9. When tagging runners, players need to secure the ball in the glove with the throwing hand.

10. On "run-down" plays, players should attempt to limit the number of throws to two. The objective is to make the tag while forcing the runner back to his original base.

11. All players need to be alert and back up plays that don't directly involve them.

DRILLS

The following drills are designed to employ skills which fielders will perform during the course of the game:

1. PICK-UP DRILL

Two players face each other about 20 feet apart. One player, the tosser, kneels down while the other player, the fielder, takes a fielding stance without a glove. The tosser then rolls the ball to the fielder's left or right. With palms facing up, the fielder shuffles to the ball, fields the ball and throws it underhanded back to the tosser. The two players reset and continue the drill until the fielder handles 10 balls to the right and 10 to the left. Once done, the players should switch positions and begin again.

2. SHORT-HOP DRILL

The Short-Hop Drill also requires two players and uses the same alignment as the pick-up drill. The only difference is that the fielder uses a glove for this drill. The tosser throws sharp, one-hop grounders to the fielder. The fielder works on watching the ball into the glove and developing fluid fielding motion. Continue the drill until each player has fielded 10 chances cleanly.