

Section Five: Throwing

Activities

- Demonstrate the across-seam grip of ball
- Conduct 2 throwing drills which emphasise grip and backspin
- Supervise an effective long-toss throwing session

Demonstrate the across-seam grip of ball

Two (or three, if hand is small) fingers across the horse-shoe, thumb directly opposite.



Conduct 2 throwing drills which emphasise grip and backspin

1. Wrist flips: player uses glove hand to support elbow at shoulder height (upper arm remains stationary throughout); hold ball with correct grip, fingers pointed forward; in one movement, snap wrist back and forward to flip ball forward to partner



2. Striped-ball throwing. Stripe aligned with fingers and thumb; full throw aiming to keep on the same angle as arm slot.



Supervise an effective long-toss throwing session

Although one of the simplest of drills, long toss is a valuable way to build throwing ability (mechanics, velocity and arm endurance), and is thus a critical part of team's training program. As with all activity, players must be eased into it, so that the body can gradually adapt to the specific stresses.

1. After warming the body up, players commence throwing in pairs 5-10m apart, always aiming at a specific target: eg, the face of their partner.



2. Each has 5-10 throws at that distance, and then one partner takes a couple of steps back.



3. This process is repeated (5-10 throws at each gradually increasing distance) until, after they have been doing the drill for a couple of weeks, each player is throwing as far as they can.



4. Players should be encouraged to throw as easily as possible for the given distance, and to "give the ball some air": there is no need to keep the throw flat.



5. Once well-conditioned, they can make 20-25 throws at their maximum distance, then shorten up the distance to make some flat throws.



6. Start at about 8 minutes; as players become stronger, this drill can last up to 20 minutes.

Section Six: Pitching

Knowledge

- Outline the key risk factors for young pitchers

Activities

- Conduct a 30 pitch bullpen
- Use simple drills to teach pitching mechanics

Instruction level

- Teach pitching from a set position using the key coaching points for this age
- Outline the rules for pitchers specific to this level

Outline the key risk factors for young pitchers

The most important factors contributing to arm injuries in pitchers, particularly young pitchers, are:

1. Fatigue and overuse: the more they pitch, the more connective tissue is overloaded, and the greater the likelihood of injury. This is by far the most important factor, and must be carefully monitored.
2. Throwing velocity: the harder they throw, even if they have “good mechanics”, the more stress they put on key structures. All the force has to be transmitted through the shoulder and elbow at some stage. One problem is that a coach will often want to use the hard thrower more often, when in fact, he should be throwing less.
3. Throwing mechanics: a poor delivery can put even more stress on the arm.
4. Conditioning: if the arm or the body is not conditioned to do the work, chances of injury increase.
5. Pitch type: contrary to popular belief, the fastball places more stress on the arm than any other pitch type (assuming all are thrown with proper mechanics). The problem with the curve ball, for example, seems to be two-fold:
 - coaches overuse young pitchers who can throw one because they win a lot of games: fatigue and overuse are the issue
 - young pitchers, because they have small hands or a lack of coordination and strength, often throw it with incorrect mechanics



Teach pitching from a set position using the key coaching points for this age level

1. Set position.

- Side on to target with throwing-side foot up against pitcher's plate
- Glove-side foot closest to target
- Athletic stance without tension, weight evenly distributed
- Hands joined in middle of body just below rib cage



2. Knee and hand lift. To commence delivery, lift joined hands and throwing-side foot at same time, knee to about hip height, hands to about neck height; minimal tension.



3. Eyes remain on target from the time the front knee reaches its maximum height until the ball reaches catcher



4. Finish position.

- Throwing hand passing below opposite knee
- Pitcher able to remain balanced on front leg
- Sole of rear foot facing sky.

Use these guidelines to have players rehearse pitching delivery into a screen or to each other



Conduct a 30 pitch bullpen

Bullpens can be conducted on flat ground, or on a mound, but should always be done in a measured manner and for a specific purpose. An inexperienced pitcher in particular should not be permitted to throw as many or as few as he or she likes; for one thing, the amount of work being done by the catcher needs to be considered.

You will need a catcher in full gear. As part of his leadership duties, the catcher should be trained to run the bullpens: he should have the authority to do so, know the routines, the rules etc.

1. The pitcher must be warmed up and ready to start (long toss etc) before the bullpen starts. Do not allow them to warmup with the catcher.
2. The purpose of this type of pen is to rehearse making pitches: focus on hitting the target, not how hard they can throw etc.
3. The catcher is also practicing the art of receiving the ball. They should make sure they try to block any pitches in the dirt (particularly off-speed pitches)
4. Generally, the target should be in the bottom 1/3 of the strike zone: “the box”.
5. It is the pitchers job to know the purpose of the pen session and his routine, and be able to do it unsupervised. (This may take a little time).
6. A pitcher should easily be able to throw 6 pitches per minute, so this session should take around 5 minutes. Any longer, and they are throwing too many pitches or wasting time.
7. It is possible, and more time efficient, to have two pitchers alternating as they work through their routines.
8. A good basic routine (one of many!):
 - 5 “box” fastballs (middle the bottom 1/3 of the strike zone) from a windup
 - 5 “box” fastballs from set position
 - 4 “box” change-ups from a windup
 - 4 “box” change-ups from set position
 - 4 “half-box” fastballs (2 on the inside half of plate, 2 on outside) from windup
 - 4 “half-box” fastballs from set position
 - 4 fastballs up and down: alternating pitches above strike zone and then “box”

NB: If the pitcher achieves a poor result, he does not “get another try”. That is, the first round of 5 fastballs consists of 5 attempts, and no more. The catcher should keep count of how many times the pitcher “makes the pitch”: pitches the ball to the intended location. This number becomes as assessment of the pitcher’s success.



Rehearse basic pickoffs

The purpose of a pickoff is to make it harder for the runner to get a good jump to the next base (to “keep him honest”). Making an out on a pickoff is just a bonus.

1. Pickoff to 1B for a right hander

- Split hands and move both feet at the same time.
 - Right hand is lifted directly to head height on the 3B side: as the body turns away, the arm will be in perfect position for a short-arm throw.
 - Quick repositioning of feet: right foot is turned square to 1B; left foot takes short step to 1B.
- Without pause, make an accurate throw knee height over the base



2. Pickoff to 1B for a lefthander

- Knee lift and early hand movements should look exactly like the commencement of a pitch.
- As knee reaches highest point, step directly to 1B and make knee-high throw over 1B.
- As skill improves, learn to minimize turning the shoulders to 1B



3. Pickoff at 2B

- The mechanics are the same for both RHP and LHP.
- In one short jumping movement, swap feet: the stride foot should come down slightly on the 2B side of the mound.
- Ensure that the turn is to the glove side; ie: clockwise for LHP, anti-clockwise for a RHP.
- Using a short arm action, make a knee-high throw over the 2B.



Develop pitchers' fundamental fielding skills

Use a fungo or roll the ball to have pitchers rehearse:

1. Routine comebacker: 1-3, 1-6 and 1-2.



3. Bunts to both sides, 1-3



4. Bunt on 3B side, 1-5





5. Covering first base on a groundball to right side:

- Routine play: get ball from 1Bman early, then step on base, staying in fair territory, then turn to look for the next play (often at 3B).



- 1Bman fumble (pitcher will have to stop on base)



- Self-executed: pitcher fields ball which is leading him to 1st base, continues running to base and makes the out unassisted

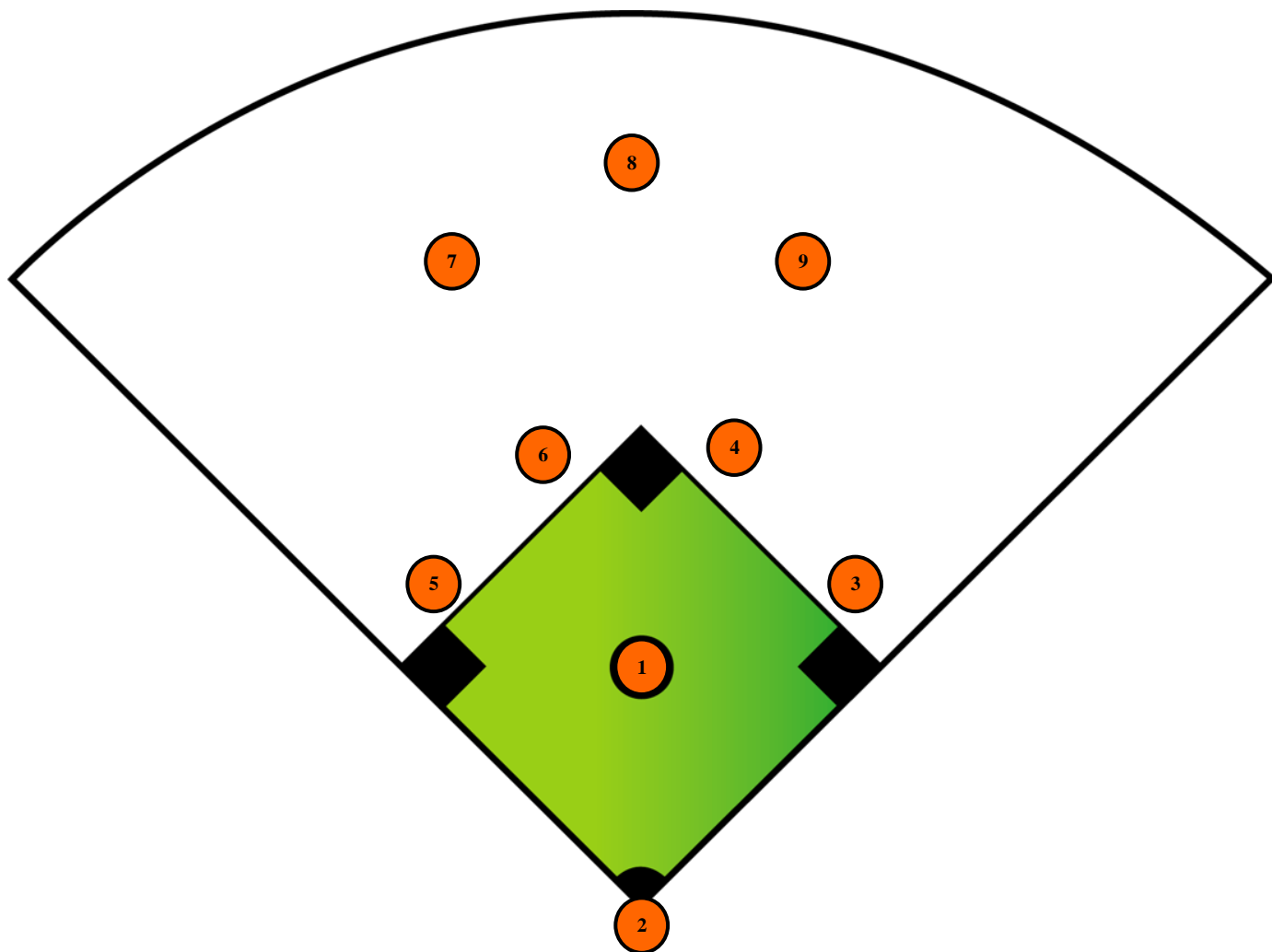
Section Seven: Defence

- Knowledge** - Name and briefly explain the 6 Fs
- Activities** - Implement use of self-monitored activities to develop fielding skills
- Use roll drill to engage players in groundball fundamentals using the 6 Fs
- Rehearse basic double plays
- Have players in all positions practice throwing to different bases and using different throws
- Practise outfield basics
- Conduct drills for catchers to emphasise receiving the ball
- Utilise activities designed to encourage players to catch a fly ball
- Conduct practice of the basic cut-off plays
- Develop pitchers' fundamental fielding skills
- Rehearse basic pickoffs
- Conduct the figure-8 double-play exercise to rehearse execution of double plays
- Instruction** - Teach the fielding positions
- Explain "straight up"
- Provide coherent instruction in the basic points of each of the 6 Fs
- Position the catcher correctly in relation to hitter/home plate
- Guide the catcher on posture with no runner on base
- Teach the basics of outfield play

Teach the fielding positions

Correctly name, number and locate each of the nine positions:

1. Pitcher
2. Catcher
3. 1st Base
4. 2nd Base
5. 3rd Base
6. Shortstop
7. Left field
8. Centre field
9. Right field



Explain “straight up”

- More balls are hit toward the middle of the field than toward the foul lines.
- Therefore, it makes sense to position fielders to defend the middle of the field, rather than the sides.
- Corner outfielders are positioned in line with the relevant baseline; ie, left field in line with the 1B-2B line, and right field in line to the 2B-3B line.
- This is called “straight up”: it can make it very difficult to get a ball through a gap (diagram on previous page has fielders positioned this way).



Implement use of self-monitored activities to develop fielding skills

1. Individual fielding soccer. Make up your own rules; here is a sample:

- Goals 5m wide and 15m apart
- Attempt to roll ball through opponents goal
- Opponent gets a point 2 points if you succeed - first to 10 points loses.
- Gets 1 point for a fumble
- Ball is rolled (must bounce at least twice; opponent can deduct 1 point if they catch ball on 1st bounce; goes back to zero if they get it on full)
- Must roll ball from where you field it



2. Fielding squash. Rules can be improvised (preferably by players themselves).

- Needs a solid wall with flat ground in front, and a “line” about 10m from wall with a limit at each end (defined by two cones?)
- Player throws ball at wall, attempting to make it roll over the back line between the cones, or make it stop before it reaches the line
- First to 10 points loses
- Gain a point for: fumbling the ball, letting it roll over back line, letting it stop in front of line before you get to it, rolling ball so that it passes outside the cones, missing the wall, etc.
- This a fast game which can be played in pairs or with several more required to field in specific order (like a batting order)



3. Fielding Soccer: once again, encourage modification of rules, equipment etc

- Two teams, rectangular field, approx. 20m x 40m, target at each end (cone, milk crate etc)
- One team in possession of the ball at centre court, attempting to advance toward goal by passing to teammates (underarm rolls only: ball should bounce twice).
- Player in possession may not run – teammates try to position themselves to receive pass.
- Opposition attempt to intercept etc, but cannot crowd player with ball (5m distance).
- When close enough to scoring cones fielder calls out “Shot”. All players stop, and allow a free shot at cone (underarm roll).
- Cone must be hit to score one goal.
- When goal is scored or missed, opposition gets ball to start at cone.



4. Over the line: This drill, which also incorporates swing practice, is included as Level 1 coach competency, but is included here as well because it is a good game for the players to run and modify themselves.

- Two equal teams.
- Each hitter attempts to hit ball between two markers 10-25m away and about the same distance apart.
- Ball must touch ground on far side of markers to score a point.
- Defending team members position themselves to prevent batted balls from passing between markers, and to prevent fly balls from landing over the line between the markers.
- Hitter continues to hit until he/she fails to score
- All members hit once, then teams swap roles.
- Possible variations: team has a set number of outs per inning, each hitter hitting once in turn until given number of “outs” (say 10) are made.



Name and briefly explain the 6 F's

"The Six F's" is an approach to teaching and assessing technique for fielding a ground ball. Devised by Perry Hill, has been adopted as the foundation for infield instruction in Australia.

1. Feet:



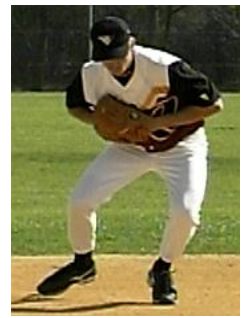
- Body should be in a lively, active position as the ball comes into the hitting zone. This usually requires preparatory movement as the pitcher delivers the ball.
- Avoid excessive movement in toward the hitter (reduces lateral range).
- Wide base (feet wider than shoulder width).
- Middle infielders are usually better off in a more upright position than the corners.
- Expect the ball will be hit to you every pitch
- Approach the ball "like a plane coming into land", (not like a helicopter). That is, lower the body gradually as you near the ball.
- Receive ball in front of the eyes (not underneath them)
- Move through the fielding position rather than remain fixed & rigid ("Left foot down as the ball hits the glove")

2. Field:



- Wide base.
- Head directly over the line of the ball.
- Field the ball out in front of the eyes.
- Body should be low enough to allow glove to reach the ground while the arm has some bend.

3. Funnel:



- Bring the ball in two hands to the centre of gravity (this makes for better balance)

4. Footwork:



“Replace your feet”.

- The right foot comes down where the left foot had been prior to the crowhop.
- At the same time, the left foot moves toward the target.
- At no time do the feet cross over

5. Fire: Make a firm, accurate throw



6. Follow: The body follows in the direction of the throw.



(The notes above describe technique for a right-handed thrower. Left-handers will use opposite leg and arm where appropriate)

Provide coherent instruction on the basic points of each of the 6 F's

The 6 F's are used to teach consistency in making the routine groundball out. They can also be used to diagnose technique flaws. (More detailed information, including illustrations, can be found in the support material).

Feet:

- Be active and alive on your feet, ready to go in any direction, as the ball reaches the hitting zone. A wide base will improve range to the side.
- Use your feet to move aggressively but smoothly to the ball once it is hit

Field:

- Move through the ball: you should be coming on to your left foot as the ball hits your glove, no matter what posture you are in.
- Fielding posture is important. A wide base will make it easier to get down, and give your hands more space to work in
- Hands should be out well in front of face as the ball hits the glove

Funnel:

- Bring the ball to your centre of gravity with both hands once you have fielded it.

Footwork:

- Replace your feet: right to left, left to target. In this way you avoid having to cross your legs and you come down aligned to the target
- With practice, you can take a long crow-hop in this way, and thus gain a lot of momentum for your throw.

Fire:

- Make a firm, accurate throw to the target.
- If your footwork is good enough, the arm does not have to do much work at all.

Follow:

- Your body follows the throw for two or three steps. This ensures that your momentum was going that way in the earlier phases of execution.

Use roll drill to engage players in rehearsing groundball fundamentals using the 6 F's

Roll drill is to fielding what tee-work is to hitting: it gives the player the chance to develop the physical skills without having to master the complex visual aspects of the task.

The coach kneels on one knee, with a bucket of balls, about 10 m from the player or line of players (no more than 6 players per coach), and rolls an easy grounder to the location relevant to the particular skill being practiced. The player makes the play, disposes of the ball as required (eg, return to coach, or throw to 1B), then goes to the end of the line. In this way the 6 Fs approach (Feet, Field, Funnel, Footwork, Fire, Follow) can be used to develop skills in the following:

1. Groundball straight at the player
2. Groundball slightly to the left
3. Groundball substantially to the left
4. Groundball substantially to the left with a reverse pivot throw
5. Groundball slightly to the right
6. Backhand play to the right: replace the feet
7. Backhand play to the right: no step
8. Backhand play substantially to the right: throw on the run



Conduct the figure-8 double-play exercise to rehearse the execution of basic double plays

This is a high intensity drill and a lot of fun. The coach will need a good bucket of balls:

- Half the players on 2B side at double play depth, other half on SS side, one player (or coach) at 1B to receive throws.
- If a player, 1Bman should be rotated (perhaps have a rule: if you make a bad throw, you replace the 1Bman)
- Ball is rolled to 1st 2Bman who feeds 1st SS who turns the DP, throwing to 1B.
- That 2Bman moves to the end of the SS line; the SS moves to the end of the 2B line.
- As they are moving to the ends of their respective lines, the coach rolls the ball to the next 2Bman, who initiates the next DP, then moves to the other line etc
- Continue without pause for 2 or 3 minutes, then move to the next phase, covering the following (depending on skill levels of players). In this way, you can cover the basic range of DP feeds and turns:
 - Ball on base side of 2Bman
 - Ball on straight at 2Bman
 - Ball on glove side of 2Bman
 - Ball on base side of SS
 - Ball on straight at SS
 - Ball on backhand side of SS



Have players in all positions practice throwing to different bases and using different throws

It is important that players have the opportunity to experiment and “fool around” with different ways of doing things: it encourages them to go outside their comfort zone, and develops their ability to learn kinaesthetically.

It is also important that they learn to throw the ball in different ways, and to different bases. By rolling the ball or fungoing it, have the players field the ball and come up with a new way to throw it, depending on where you ask them to throw it. Highlight some of the best and most outlandish solutions. Finish up with a feedback session on what they learnt.



Utilise activities designed to encourage players to catch a fly ball

1. Partner lobs. In suitable pairs, alternate throwing the ball up for the other to catch. Tip: catch ball above the eyes.



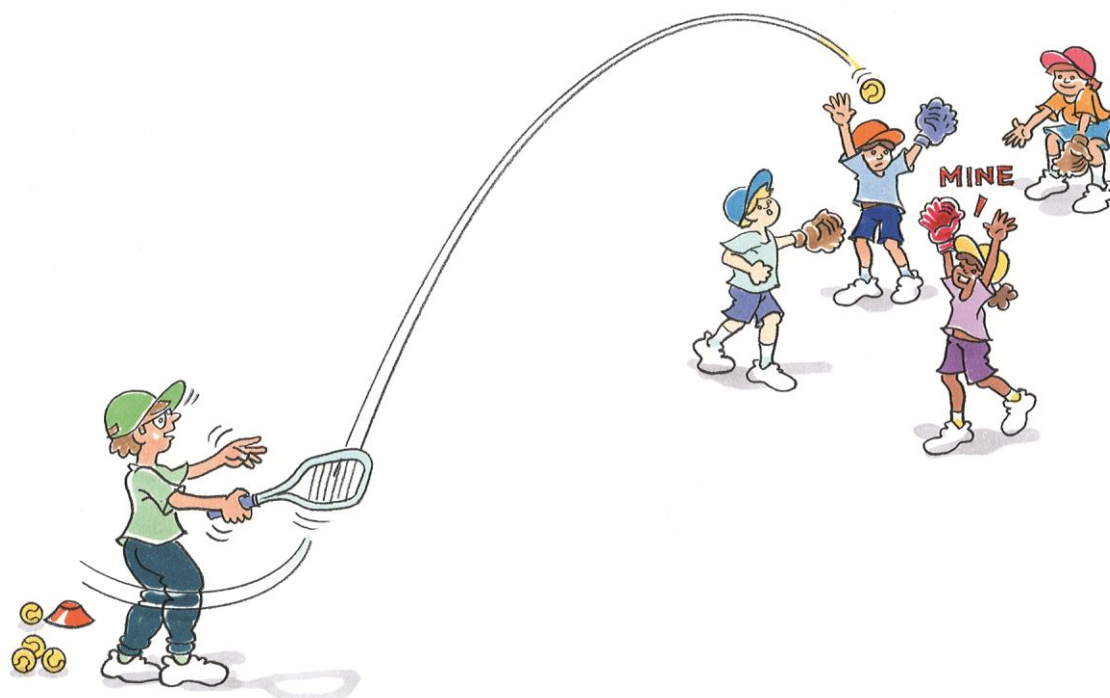
2. Running flyballs. Players start running and coach lobs, throws or hit ball so it can be caught on the run. This can be done to side or forward. Tip: use one hand to catch ball when running.



3. Going back on fly. Ball is lobbed to land somewhere behind player, player runs back to catch it. Tip: never run backwards – at worst, run sideways when going back.



4. Tennis racquet flyballs. Coach or players hit tennis balls in air for players to catch.



5. Tennis racquet and ball Over-the-Line (competitive game described in Level 1 material)

Refer to Over the line, the difference being the tennis racquet.

Teach the basics of outfield play

The most important basic skills for outfielders are:

1. Catching fly balls

- On a routine fly, try to catch the ball at face height, in the centre of the body. If possible, get behind the ball and move forward slightly as you catch it.
- When running for a catch, pump the arms like a sprinter until you get to the location to catch the ball. Holding the glove out while you run destroys balance.
- Use only the glove hand when catching on the run

2. Fielding groundballs

- On a routine groundball, when the runner is unlikely to advance more than one base, make the play safely, getting your leg behind the ball to ensure it cannot get past.
- When the runner has a chance to advance more than one base, attack the ball, field it and come up in the best position possible to make a good throw

3. Throwing to bases

- Know in advance where you will throw the ball if it is hit straight to you, or to one side, or past you: there will certainly be a difference.
- Look where the runners are before the pitch:
 - a. if the ball is on the ground and straight to you, you cannot stop the runners advancing 1 base, but if you make a tidy play, you can probably stop the advancing 2 bases. So, before the pitch, plan to throw 2 bases ahead of the leading runner.
 - b. If it is hit to the side, you probably cannot stop them advancing 2 bases, so you will be trying to stop them advancing 3 bases.
- Once you have the ball, make an accurate one-hop throw to the base.



Practise outfield basics

1. Fungo fly balls: coach hits fly balls to players who attempt to catch them. The difficulty should be adjusted to the ability of the player (in most cases, the hard hit ball straight at the player is the most difficult to read). Players should also rehearse throwing to the appropriate base once the catch is made.
2. Fungo ground balls: coach hits ground balls to players who field them according to the specified situation. On a ball hit straight to fielder with “no runner on base”, the outfielder should play it safe and make sure to keep the ball. If there is a “runner on base”, they must field and move smoothly into a throwing posture. If it is a “do or die” play, with an important runner on 2B, they must attack the ball and come up throwing.
3. Running fly ball drill:
 - Players, each with a ball, line up beside coach
 - In turn, each flips ball to coach, runs directly away for 5-10m, then cuts to the right or left (as specified) at 45°
 - Coach throw ball in front of player so that player continues at speed to make the catch
 - Practise going both left and right on various angles



Position the catcher correctly in relation to hitter/home

- Position yourself as far forward as you can without being hit by swing; glove can usually be held in line with hitter's back foot. If catcher is too far back, he cannot catch ball at correct height, and he will more likely be distracted by the swing of the bat.
- Centre of body and glove (target) aligned with centre of plate.



Instruct the catcher on his catching posture with no runner on base

- Priority is to be able to effectively receive any pitch around the strike zone
- Comfortable and balanced posture (several variations are illustrated); rear can be “down”
- Glove at bottom of strike zone, arm in relaxed position with elbow clear of knee
- Provide open glove as target for pitcher
- Throwing arm protected behind right leg (hung loosely to right heel)



Conduct drills for catchers to emphasise receiving the ball

1. Short distance flips. In catching stance, catcher receives ball flipped underhand to various locations by partner.
2. Bullpens. Catch pitchers while they are practicing their delivery. Emphasise catching everything, no matter where it is pitched.

