

# Mosinee Baseball Defense

Drills  
&  
Techniques

# Daily Team Warm-Up

1. Jog forward/backward (2 Times)
2. Butt Kicks (down & back)
3. High Knees (down & back)
4. Karaoke (Left & right)
5. Walking Lunges (down & back)
6. Side Lunges (down & back)
7. Shoulder Shrugs (10 count)
8. Neck Range of Motion (forward, back, left, right, circle right, circle left (8 seconds each))
9. Arm Circles (start small get bigger to full motion (20 seconds))
10. Plank (10 count – 3 Times)
11. 15 push-ups together (slow) good form
12. Mountain Climbers (15 per leg)
13. Jumping Jacks (25)

## Throwing Warm-up

### Keys to throwing right:

- Throw over the top
- Always grip with 4 seam grip
- front shoulder/lead elbow/glove at target, pull down to follow through
- Follow through

### On one knee

1. Elbow in glove, wrist flick 15 feet apart. 10 throws
2. Form Power T stop, look at ball in power position, and follow through. 10 throws
3. Rock back in power T, as you are throwing stand up and follow through. 10 throws

### Standing

1. Feet shoulder width apart, rotate at hips front shoulder/lead elbow/glove at target, power T, and follow through. 10 throws
2. Step and through with all above fundamentals. 2 throws then take one step back.
3. Long Toss-Crow hop and throw on a line.
4. Come back together, stop at 60 feet and work on quick hands/release.

## Infield Daily Drills:

### Pickups:

1. Players stand 10 feet apart; throw the ball 2 feet in front of their glove to simulate a short hop.
2. 10 Center, 10 Forehand, 10 backhand

### Ground ball fundamentals:

1. **Ready Position**
  - Feet shoulder width apart, knees bent, on toes, glove out in front relaxed.
2. **Approach**
  - Foot work; come to the ball, right then left foot, and field ball in center of stance. Stay in front of the ball.
3. **Ball hit straight at you - 10 rolled grounders from partner**
  - Meet the ball – right, left foot, square to the ball.
  - Glove on the ground, arm extended, butt down wide stance, throwing hand palm to palm to cover ball as it is caught.
  - once ball is fielded stay low don't stand up, right foot steps through the glove toward first base, hands break up to power tee not down to your hip. Step at first and throw.
4. **Ball hit to your left (Forehand Right handed player) 10 rolled grounders from partner**
  - Get the best angle on the ball as you can, angle toward first if possible.
  - Ball is fielded next to left foot, gather yourself and step with your right foot toward 1<sup>st</sup> while staying low and step and throw.
5. **Ball hit to your right (backhand-right handed player) 10 rolled grounders from partner**
  - Get the best angle on the ball as you can
  - Proper form: Right knee up, left knee just above the ground, glove on ground just in front of right foot.
  - once ball is fielded stay low don't stand up, right foot steps through the glove toward first base, hands break up to power tee not down to your hip. Step at first and throw.

## **Outfield Drills**

### **Stance-Approach-Reaction-Sprint-Locate:**

Players assemble in front of coach with at least 3 yards separation.

Step #1: Stance & Approach - Players stand with a shoulder width stance and to walk forward slightly on toes as pitch is delivered.

Step #2: Reaction & Sprint - Players walk forward and react to the coach pointing in a direction. When they see the coach point the player plants their foot and drops in that direction in a full sprint. Attention is given to turning the hips for maximal speed. This is where spacing becomes vital as well..

Step #3: Locate – Now one player participates at a time. Players are to hustle through the drill to complete maximum repetitions. Steps one and two are put together while the coach also throws a ball in the air for the player to locate and catch.

### **Foot Forward/Hand Position:**

Players assemble in front of coach with at least 3 yards separation.

Step #1: Foot Forward & Hand Position – Players are instructed on the ideal stance to catch a fly-ball in with the glove foot forward and the glove in front with the throwing hand connected to the glove. Coach checks each player and makes sure each understands the desired stance.

Step #2 – One player participates at a time. Players are tossed an easy fly ball that they are to get behind and catch coming forward with proper foot and hand position.

### **Spin and Catch:**

This is a fun extension of the Foot Forward/Hand Position Drill.

-One player participates at a time. When the coach says “spin” the player begins to spin; after 3 to 8 seconds the coach throws a ball in the air and says “go.” When the player hears “go” they locate the ball and catch it with correct foot and hand position.

### **Crow-hop/Crow-hop for Distance**

Players assemble in front of coach with at least 3 yards separation.

Step #1: Crow-hop – Coach demonstrates a crow-hop and the players attempt to replicate. The coach uses various techniques to try and improve the players’ crow-hopping, e.g. comparing the crow-hop to a karaoke shuffle and working on pushing off of glove foot while crossing over with throwing arm leg.

Step #2: Crow-hop for Distance – Coach demonstrates a powerful crow-hop for distance. It is important to exaggerate here and be explosive. The players compete and try to Crow-hop further each time.

### **Fly Ball Lines w/ Crow-hop**

Players assemble in single file lines with at least 50 feet separating the front of each line. The lines are facing each other. – Several coaches will demonstrate this drill. The front of one line will be responsible for tossing the ball in the air. The front of another line is the one who will use skills learned so far to correctly approach the ball, make the catch, crow-hop, and throw to the next person in the other line. After every throw, players follow to the right and enter at the end of the other line.

### **Ground Ball Lines w/ Crow-hop**

Same as Fly Ball Lines but with ground balls instead.

### **Off the Wall Flies**

One player participates at a time. – The player who is up lines themselves about 20 feet away from the wall with their back turned to the wall. The player will be facing a coach. Once the coach throws the ball the player will turn around and react to the ball as it bounces off of the wall and locate and catch the ball correctly. The player will return the ball to the coach and go to the back of the line.

### **Football Pass (Streak Route)**

One player participates at a time. – The player who is up stands to either the right or the left of the coach. When the coach says go the player takes off sprinting with their hips pointed forward. After five strides the player may look to locate the ball and make a catch. The player returns the ball and goes to the end of the line.

### **Over the Middle (Dig Route)**

One player participates at a time. – The player who is up is standing 45 degrees and about 50 feet to the right or left of the coach. The coach says go and the player runs forward across the middle intersecting the path of the ball. The coach throws a lazy line drive for the player to track down. Coaches should focus on good running mechanics, e.g. glove tucked, pumping arms, head still.

### **Drop Step/Over the Shoulder (Corner Route)**

One player participates at a time. – The player who is up is located 5 feet in front, facing the coach. When the coach points in either right or left, the player plants and drops at a 45 degree angle, sprints, and locates the ball thrown by the coach. The player catches the ball correctly, getting behind and attacking the ball if possible. The player returns the ball to the coach and goes to the end of the line.

### **3 Cone Drill Breaks-Angle Cutoffs**

Three cones are set up 20 feet away from one another in a straight line. One player participates at a time. – The player who is up is located 20 feet in front of the middle cone facing the coach who is an additional 5 feet away. The coach points left right or overhead. The player sprints to and around the cone. The coach rolls a ground ball that the player must cut off. The coach should choose right and left more than middle..

### **Ball off the Wall/Corner-Locate Cut-off]**

Three players participate at a time. There are three groups; one in the corner, and two on the other side of the gym, spread apart as much as possible. The first player in the corner line is “up first” and the first in the other two lines are a cut-off men. – The coach throws a ball into the corner of the gym. The player does his best to locate and gather the ball as quickly as possible. Attention should be put on using the throwing hand when necessary instead of the glove and not wasting precious time with habits such as glove tapping. The coach also immediately points to one of the cut-off men. The cut-off

man who is pointed to will step out, get big with arms in the air and yell "here here." The player from the corner must recognize this and get the cut-off man the ball as soon as possible using correct technique. Make sure players other than the three participating stay out of the way for safety reasons. After each rep, players who were just in the front rotate to the end of the next line.

### **At the Fence Call-it**

This drill works really well using the divider so that there is less likelihood of an injury. Students form two lines: hypothetically left and center field. The player in the front of each line is going. - The coach throws a ball somewhat in between the players towards the divider or wall. Players work on communicating and locating the wall. Make it fun for them and give the opportunity to make jumping catches at the wall.

Web Gem Dives on Mats

Sliding Shoe-string Catch

### **Web Gem Dives on Mats**

Set up some of the big padded track mats near the center of a gym. Have players line up single file. One player at a time, they run towards the mat and the coach throws a ball for them to leap and catch in the air. This is a fun drill but players can still focus on proper running form and launching themselves, hand eye coordination, full extension etc.. Be Safe

### **Sliding Shoe-string Catch**

This drill works much better if players wear pants. One player participates at a time. Players line up at least 30 feet from the coach. When the coach says go, the player starts running at about 80% speed towards the coach. The coach tosses a low ball underhand forcing the player to slide like they would into a base to make the catch. Coaches have to model this catch.

# Catcher Drills

## Techniques to cover before drills

Stances guys on and bases clear  
Block form  
Pouncing on blocked balls and bunts  
Glove-hand transfer/exchange  
Blocking home  
Framing  
Signals

## Indoor Catcher Drills

### **Quick Exchange:**

-Player in Stance. Coach throws a ball simulating a pitch. Player catches ball and makes ball exchange to hand and into throwing position. Work way up in speed beginning with slower reps and finishing with as quick as possible.

### **Foot Work for Throws:**

-Player in stance. Coach throws a pitch and yells out 1, 2 or 3. Player responds with the appropriate footwork. Jab step to 1<sup>st</sup>, step-over to 2<sup>nd</sup> and drop step to 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Block:**

-Player in stance. Coach throws tennis ball in dirt. Player slides to block and pounces on ball working on keeping quickly getting to throwing position. Focus on chest and shoulders so the ball ends up in front

### **Block/Stance/Block:**

-Set up a line of baseballs 3 yard apart: about 5 balls. Player starts at one end and approaches ball. Player gets in stance and then drops for the block on coaches go call. The player moves up to next ball and gets in stance repeating all the way through the line.

### **3 Ball Block & Pick Up:**

-Three balls are set up in front of the player: one directly in front, one to the left and one to the right. The coach points to a ball and the player blocks that ball. The coach rolls a ball in front of the player who then pounces on it and works on quick exchange.

### **Blocking Home:**

-Player stands in front of home. Coach throws in a ball simulating from an outfielder or cutoff man. Player focuses on controlling ball with two hands and blocking plate simultaneously. Make sure they are ready for impact and making a strong low tag.

### **Framing:**

-Player in stance. Coach throws ball hitting pitch spots. Player works on framing during the catch. Focus on sliding body and glove tilt.

# 3 Drills That Improve Agility for Baseball Infielders

By: **Zachariah Thompson**

Provided by: [Stack.com](https://stack.com)

The better a baseball infielder's range, the more plays he can make. But range has to be developed through baseball agility drills that work on first-step burst, quickness and acceleration. Here are three drills I use with my infielders at Ashland University.

## Baseball Agility Drills

### 4-Color Cone Drill

Suitable for all ages, this drill works all three important agility skills—first-step burst, quickness and acceleration. It is especially beneficial because it mimics game situations throughout, including carrying your glove low toward a ground ball and finishing with throwing technique.

- Set up a starting point for your infielder.
- Place four different colored cones 10 feet in front of the infielder at various angles—e.g., red cone at 60 degrees to the right; blue cone at 45 degrees to the right; yellow cone at 45 degrees to the left; and green cone at 60 degrees to the left.
- Coach calls out a color; player runs to the cone, keeping his glove hand down as if charging a ground ball.
- Player backpedals to the starting point.
- Repeat until specified reps are completed. On the final rep of the set, the player does a "slow-roller" fielding and throwing action through the cone.
- **Sets/Reps:** 3x5

### 5-10-5 Drill

This drill is great for infielders, because it improves their first-step quickness and acceleration toward a ground ball hit in either direction.

From the starting point (Cone A), set up a cone 5 yards to the left (Cone B) and another one 5 yards to the right (Cone C).



- Straddle Cone A.
- Turn and sprint to Cone B and touch it.
- Turn and sprint to Cone C and touch it.
- Turn and sprint through Cone A.
- Repeat drill in opposite direction.
- Coaches can also instruct players to laterally shuffle through the 5-10-5 pattern.
- **Sets:** 2-3 each direction

#### **Speed Ladder Fielding Drill**

This one improves an infielder's foot speed, teaching him to maintain solid balance throughout his movements in game-like situations.

- Player performs a selected speed ladder routine toward a partner.
- Once the player makes it through the ladder, the partner rolls a ground ball toward him.
- Repeat, varying the direction of the ground balls (center, left, right).
- Repeat using different speed ladder routines.
- **Sets:** 2-3 each variation

# The Seven Sins of Outfield Play

by Steven E. Michael

The goal of outfielders is to cleanly field the ball and efficiently get it back to the infield. I have selected seven sins that outfielders do that prevent them from achieving that goal. And if you can get your outfielders to correct these problems, your defense will show marked improvement, and **player injuries will decline**. In this installment, we will look at the first three sins that outfielders commit most often.

## Sin #1: Drifting

Drifting is the lazy way to go after batted balls. Too many outfielders try to "time" the catch by drifting to the ball, mostly for style points. Drifting lets **the ball play you instead of you playing the ball** - and a few serious problems usually result.

First, the outfielder is not in position to make the throw. Drifting puts outfielders on their heels, or their momentum is going away from the throwing target. Consequently, the player tries to speed up his transition from fielding to throwing. This puts undue pressure on throwing arms, and usually ends with a poor throw.

The **wind and the sun** can also be a problem when drifting. Winds above an outfielder's head can be much stronger than at ground level. This moves the ball in uncertain ways and will usually result in a missed chance. The sun may also surprise an outfielder. Instead of getting to the catch zone early and evaluating the sun's position, he tries to time the catch, and finds the sun directly in line with the ball too late.

The **ball's spin** is also a potential problem when drifting. Balls hit to center field usually have back-spin. Back-spin helps the ball travel farther, and drifting outfielders can be fooled and miss the catch.

**Side-spin** is where the batter inside-outs the ball making it spin toward the foul line in either right or left fields. A drifting outfielder will never make up the distance to the ball in these cases.

### ***How to Correct Drifting***

Teach your outfielders to always get behind the ball. The outfielder's mindset should be to always keep the ball between him and the infield. Outfielders who drift don't move their feet to get into proper position.

The advantages of this are better balance, much better throws, and reduced possibility of arm injuries. Also, everyone is faster running forward than backward, which makes adjusting to the ball easier. Thirdly, the outfielder's momentum is now toward the throwing target which results in a quicker release of the ball.



In all outfield drills, even batting practice, have the outfielders focus on **getting into proper position**. I would make up a game with my outfielders and the guy that did the best at getting behind the ball - every time - would get a soda from coach. After awhile, my outfielders would police each other.

Here are the steps to good footwork behind the ball:



On fly balls, the outfielder should quickly get into a position that is **two strides** behind the landing spot of the ball. Now their momentum is toward the throwing target. The first stride is with the throwing-side leg and the second stride with the glove-side leg. Then make the catch.

Now they are in a balanced position to quickly make an accurate and strong throw. This **takes practice and repetition** for most young outfielders to master.

## Sin #2: Off-Balance Throws



Almost all off-balance throws are poor throws. They are neither accurate nor strong. And they are usually the direct result of improper crow-hops.

The **crow-hop** when done correctly keeps the player balanced. Balance allows the player's throwing arm to be in sync with his body, and this severely cuts down on arm injuries. The crow-hop also loads the back leg. Most all athletic actions require a move in one direction to achieve a stronger move in the opposite direction. Loading the back leg with approximately 80-90 percent of the player's weight allows him to push off that leg when making a throw.

Crow-hops also align the player's shoulders to the target. **This advantage cannot be overstated.** Many young players I have coached and seen have this problem. By not aligning their shoulders to the throwing target, they are only using half their body to throw. Weak

and off-line throws, and especially injuries, are the byproducts.

The crow-hop should be used by outfielders for all throws - whether they are urgent or non-urgent throws. I even have my outfielders practice their crow-hops when just warming up. My guys found that not only did they throw with more accuracy and strength, but they also released the ball quicker. And every split-second in the outfield saves a lot of strides on the base paths. The steps to a proper crow-hop are:

Catch the ball with the glove-side leg forward. This is done for both fly balls and ground balls. If the player drops to one knee to block a ground ball (non-urgent throw), they should drop their throwing-side knee. This will allow them to correctly execute the crow-hop when they stand up.

Push off the front leg and lift up the back knee. Pushing up with the glove-side leg slightly elevates the player and allows the back leg to lift - it also sets up the next step. Make sure the player does not mimic a high, marching band-type step. The back knee should elevate enough to achieve a balanced foot replacement only.

Replace the front foot with the back foot. This is where the player's shoulders should align with the throwing target, and the ball is removed from the glove. Now he is in a balanced position to make a good throw.

#### ***No Sliding, Gliding, and Cha-Cha Moves***

Be alert for three problems. Make sure the player's back leg does not just slide into position. The player leaves his back leg short and it never gets fully under the player's body. They sometimes hop on the back leg to overcome this unbalanced position.

Next, look out for what I call the Cha-Cha move. This is where the player will move his back leg behind him. This aligns his shoulders to the target, but takes his momentum off-target and reduces the velocity and accuracy of the throw.

Finally, is the incorrect Gliding move. Some players will leap into the air and do a sort of scissor kick. Both legs come together like a ballet dancer and he lands on the back leg, and always off-balance.

### **Sin #3: Side-Striding & Backpedaling**

Side-striding is where the player's shoulders are not facing the intended catch zone. This reduces their speed to the ball. The player's torso and arms are off-line from the direction they are running, which slows them down but also creates an unbalanced position. This also distorts the player's vision by the off-line movements of his upper body.

Insist that your outfielders run with their upper body facing the intended catch target. They must also turn their heads enough so that both eyes are on the ball, if possible. This causes increased speed to the ball and less distortion of their vision.

Backpedaling should never be used except on very unique plays. If the ball is hit on a line so hard that the only way the outfielder can get into position is to backpedal, then this is the only time backpedaling is acceptable. But even then, the correct way is usually better.

Backpedaling makes the player's heels hit the ground after the toes do. When heels hit the ground they send shock waves through the body. This distorts the outfielder's vision and makes the ball seem to jump up and down.

Secondly, backpedaling is just plain slow. Get your outfielders into the habit of always turning and running to the catch target.

## **Sin #4: Not Charging the Ball**

Charging hard to the ball takes focused practice, just like other aspects of outfield play. It's easy to get your outfielders to charge the ball, but much harder for them to do it correctly.

What typically happens is the player charges the ball, becomes out of control, and misses the ground ball. Then they look at you like it's your fault - which it is. The proper way to teach charging the ball is to also stipulate that the player get himself under control in the catch zone. Under control usually means slowing down so their balance is never compromised.

Next, the player should be taught to look for the good hop. As we all know there are no bad hops in the air. So the player should use their feet to adjust their forward momentum and catch the ground ball while it is coming down from its apex - not when it is bouncing up off the ground.

Charging the ball has several advantages. If the player happens to bobble the ball, they are closer to the throwing target. This can stop an advancing runner in his tracks. Also, charging the ball allows the player to play the ball instead of the ball playing him. By moving his feet into a position to catch the ball closer to the infield AND with a good hop, the outfielder takes control of the base hit, and not the other way around.

Lastly, all base coaches - especially third base coaches - look for two things when deciding to hold or send a runner. The catch and the distance of the throw. So if the outfielder has not charged the ball, the runner is waved home. But if the outfielder has charged hard to the ball, doubt creeps into the base coach's decision. From personal experience, I have prevented many more runners from scoring by charging the ball than I have thrown out runners at home.

## **Sin #5: Lazy Jumps**

We've all seen an outfielder start after a ball very nonchalantly, only to miss the catch by a few feet. This is a direct result of a lazy jump. Regardless of correct or incorrect footwork, lazy jumps are a matter of attitude and training. My book goes into great detail on the proper footwork to get great jumps, but training their minds is also important.

Train your outfielders to think like base stealers. The first three strides of any steal attempt are explosive - and outfielders should do the same. My tag line to my outfielders is "Gimme Three Steps".

The first three steps can't be made up - no matter how much speed an outfielder has. These steps allow the player more time to read the ball. They also force the player to focus on reading the ball. Speed and directional adjustments are also easier after the explosive three steps. Finally, by getting your outfielders in the habit of "Gimme Three Steps", you'll find they charge the ball much better.

Train your outfielders to stay low when getting their jumps. Track sprinters never stand straight up when coming out of the starting blocks, and outfielders should not as well. The player's torso should be bent at the waist to provide balance and explosive capability. This position allows the turning of the upper body, and the churning of legs and arms to happen much more quickly. All of these little things enhance the player's ability to get faster jumps.

To get my players into this habit, during batting practice I tell them to go after every ball hit to their position, but only with the first three explosive strides. Shaggers are also notified that the outfielder will be starting after every ball, just not catching every ball. Then on every fourth or fifth chance, the outfielder will play the ball through the catch.

Get your outfielders in the habit of thinking like base stealers.

## **Sin #6: Catching Over the Wrong Shoulder**

This is one of my pet peeves - probably because it's so easy to correct. Outfielders should catch fly balls over their throwing shoulder - and with two hands. I cringe every time I see a major leaguer catch the ball just above waist high, with glove only, and on the glove side of his body.

Besides the obvious advantage of using two hands, catching fly balls over the throwing shoulder makes the transition from catch to throw much faster - and with better balance. The glove should be shoulder height, mostly over the throwing shoulder, and with the player's eyesight over the top of the glove. This gives the player better vision for the catch by aligning the glove and the ball.

There is also a side benefit. It makes the player move his feet to get behind the ball (Sin #1: Drifting). There are very few Willie Mays type players in amateur baseball, so get your players to catch the ball correctly first.

## **Sin #7: Lack of Communication**

Communication starts with outfielders knowing their priorities. They should know that the center fielder is the field general. If he calls it, corner outfielders should back him up.

Experience with all levels of outfielders has shown me that just saying the center fielder is the general is not enough. For instance, I had a player who thought that no matter where the ball was hit, it was the center fielder's ball (really!). And sometimes corner outfielders will yield to the center fielder despite themselves standing directly under the ball. And I have witnessed corner outfielders give up the chance despite the center fielder's momentum taking him away from the throwing target. All of these exceptions to the general rule should be discussed with your outfielders.

They should also know that they have priority over infielders on pop-ups behind the infield. Teach your infielders to go hard after pop-ups until they are called off by the outfielder. Then train your outfielders to go hard until they know they won't catch the ball. Lastly, show them how back-spin and side-spin alters the ball's flight. Back-spin moves the ball further into the outfield. And side-spin moves the ball toward the foul lines.

With all these situations and more, verbal communication is key. Outfielders should call for the ball loudly and at least three times. This helps prevent collisions when both outfielders call the ball - and neither of them hear the other.

When an outfielder hears the other outfielder call the ball, he should answer to confirm it. "Take it! Take it! Take it!" is what I teach.

Outfielders should communicate to tell fellow outfielders where to throw the ball - especially on tag plays. Speaking of which, outfielders should let the catching outfielder know if a runner is tagging or

trying to take the extra base.

They should also warn about the fence. I tell my guys to let the other outfielder know he is approaching the fence five strides before impact. This allows enough time for the pursuing outfielder to adjust.

Outfielders should also direct traffic in certain situations. When an infielder and outfielder are converging on a pop-up, it's always better to yell the player's name who has called the ball.

With all the signals and communications that are taught in the infield, don't forget to train your outfielders too. Defense wins championships.