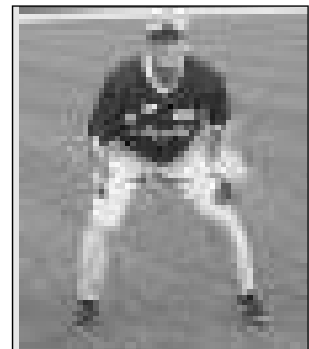


FUNDAMENTALS

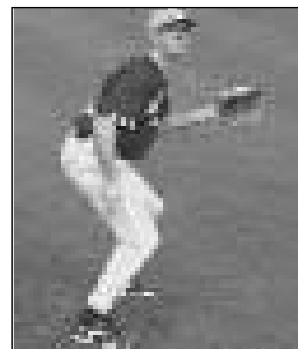
A. Ready Position: It's an athletic position, with the knees flexed and weight on the balls of the feet. The body is balanced and ready to react. Hands are off the knees and eyes are focused on the hitting zone. **(picture 5-1)**



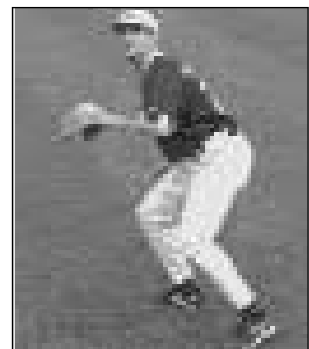
5-1: Ready position

B. Pre-pitch Movement: Relax between pitches until the pitcher starts his wind-up. To initiate pre-pitch movement, walk into the ready position with a small, controlled right-left step if right-handed or a left-right step if left-handed. The pre-pitch movement should be initiated during the wind-up and completed slightly before the ball is in the hitting zone. This allows the best reaction to a hit ball.

C. Initial Step: Balls hit to the right or left utilize a crossover step. Balls hit directly overhead utilize a drop-step. When a line drive is hit directly at the outfielder, the player should drop-step to 90 degrees with either foot getting in position to go forward or backward. The player holds this initial step until determining whether to charge or back up on the ball. **(pictures 5-2 & 5-3).**



5-2: Drop step on ball hit over left shoulder

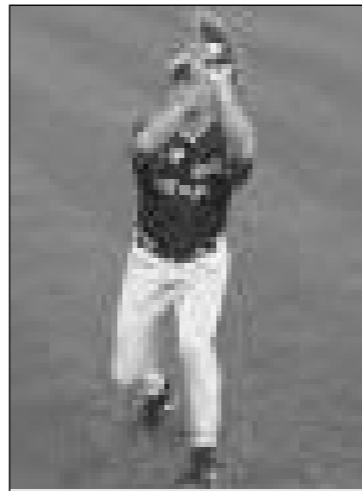


5-3: Drop step on ball hit over right shoulder



D. Tracking a Hit Ball: With eyes focused on the hitting zone, anticipate a swing and the ball being hit. After contact, run quickly to where you expect the ball will land but keeping your eyes focused on the ball and extending the arm up in time to make the catch. As players improve their judgment skills they should learn to run to a spot by taking their eyes off the ball during their tracking phase. This is done by reading the ball at contact, then taking the eyes off the ball, running fast towards the location of the batted ball, and then picking up the ball again as you sense it is time to retract the ball and make the catch. This technique takes time to develop but is the fastest way to cover ground in the outfield.

E. Catching Fly Balls: Attempt to get under the baseball whenever possible with glove position at vertical to 1 o'clock. Use two hands by lining up the thumb of the throwing hand with the thumb of the glove hand. The ball is best received slightly to the glove hand side of the face area. This is best for vision, staying balanced through out the catch and transitioning into the throw. If the player cannot get under the ball, one-handed catches are the most efficient. Using two hands is awkward and can throw off a player's balance when attempting to catch the ball on the run. Players who are 10 years old and above should begin to learn to catch the ball with the proper foot work needed to catch and throw to a base. For a quicker transition into a throw the glove hand foot should be placed in front with knees flexed and body balanced. This allows an easy transition into the crow hop to throw. (picture 5-4)



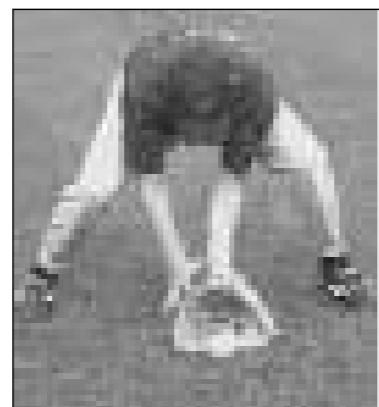
5-4: Two-handed catch

F. Charging Ground Balls: Getting to the ball quickly is important, whether there are baserunners or not. It's important to learn how to judge the speed of the ball off the bat. When the ball is hit slow, immediately charge hard. Regardless of the ball's speed, when approaching it, slow down and get under control using short, choppy steps to get into the proper fielding position. Slowing down to gain body control prepares the fielder for bad hops and gives him a better chance to field the ball. The fielder will also be in a better throwing position. Bending over at the waist at the last moment leads to poor body balance and gives the fielder little chance to make adjustments on a bad hop.

G. Fielding Ground Balls: With no one on base, field the ball like an infielder or drop to one knee so ball does not get past. If runners are on base, field the ball with two hands in order to return the ball quickly to the infield. In this instance, do not drop to one knee. If baserunners are trying to advance, field the ball one-handed using glove-hand, glove-foot technique. The glove position is slightly in front and to the side of the glove-side foot. Field forward and through the ball, coming up to the throwing position. (pictures 5-5 to 5-7)



5-5: No one on base



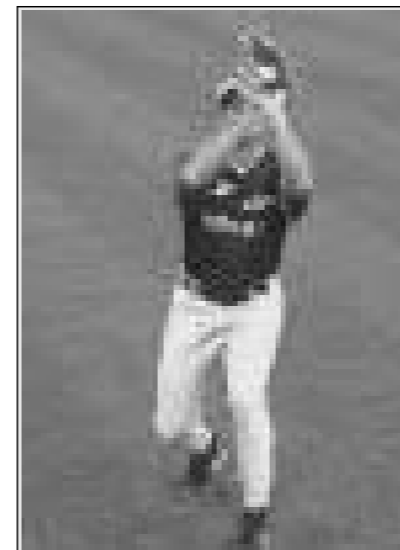
5-6: Man on base



5-7: Throwing out a runner

H. Getting the Ball to the Infielder: Never hold the ball and not know what to do with it. Always anticipate the play before it happens. After fielding the ball, pick up the infield target as soon as possible. Square up for proper alignment, and crow hop for momentum to make a strong throw to the proper base or cut-off man. When throwing to a base, make a throw an infielder can handle. Know when to throw the ball all the way in the air or when to make an accurate one-hop bounce to the base. When throwing to a relay or cut-off man, hit him chest high if possible. (pictures 5-8 to 5-10)

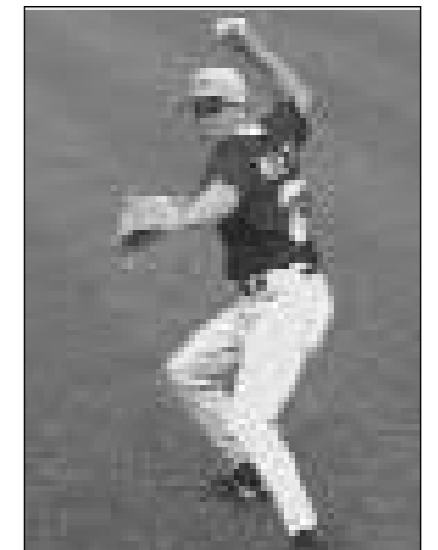
I. Outfielders Throw: When there is no immediate play, outfielders should get into the habit of setting their feet and throwing the ball firmly to a base or cut off man. When attempting to throw out or stop a runner from advancing, the throw should always be made hard and on a line.



5-8: Catch



5-9: Crow hop



5-10: Throw

DRILLS

1. Ready Position Dry Drill: Put players in a single-file line with space to move between them. On verbal command, *ready*, players get into the ready position. Check each player's position. Look for a balanced stance with weight on the balls of the feet and hands carried high and off the knees. **Physically help players get into proper position if needed.**

Recommended ages 8-16.

2. Pre-pitch Movement Dry Drill: Place four players at each outfield position and a coach or player on the mound. Players stand relaxed at their outfield position. Pitcher simulates wind-up. When the pitcher reaches his release point, all players should have utilized the proper pre-pitch movement sequence as explained in the fundamentals section. One coach should monitor the players performing this drill. **This drill will show players when to relax and when they need to be ready to react, and it keeps all players active.**

Recommended ages 8-16.



Drills – Initial Steps

3. Drop-step Dry Drill: Line up all players 5 feet apart. Start them in the ready position. A coach stands 15 feet in front of the players where all the players can see him. When the coach points up and to his left (players' right), players drop-step with their right foot to 90 degrees simulating a ball hit over their right side, and hold that position. When the coach points up and to his right (players' left), players drop-step with their left foot to 90 degrees, simulating a ball hit over their left side, and hold that position. Establishing the drop-step to 90 degrees allows a player to run in a straight line to any ball. A drop-step to 90 degrees does not have to occur on every ball hit to the side. The drop-step depth will vary depending on the angle needed to run directly to the ball. **(pictures 5-11 & 5-12) This drill teaches the correct first step for a more efficient route and angle to the ball over their heads, and it keeps all players active.**

Recommended ages 8-16.

4. Drop-step Drill: Follow the same set-up as for the drop-step dry drill. One player at a time, the coach throws a ball over the player's right or left shoulder. The throw should have a high arc and be made catchable. After catching the ball, the player throws it back to the coach and hustles back to their position in line. The coach continues down the line, monitoring for proper drop-step. If a player does not drop-step correctly, repeat with that player. To take this drill a step further, throw balls straight over the player's head. Here, the correct technique is to drop-step with the glove-hand foot so the ball can be caught without reaching across the body. **This drill teaches the correct first step to a ball over their heads and practices making running catches.**

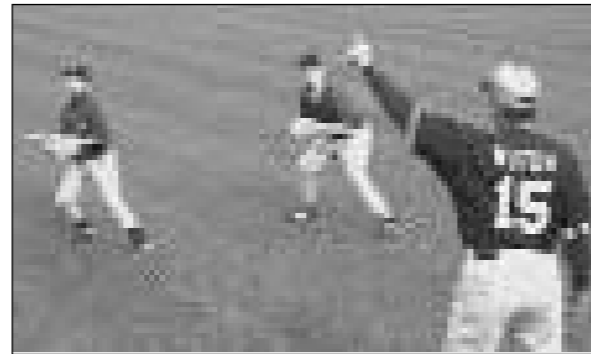
Recommended ages 8-16.

5a. Crossover Step Dry Drill: Players line up single-file and the coach stands 15 feet away, facing the first player in line. The coach points to each player's right and left, letting the player focus on proper technique. Monitor the drill to ensure the first step is not with the near-side foot. The near-side foot should pivot open and the far-side foot should cross over the near-side foot as the player runs for the ball. **This drill teaches the correct first step to a ball hit to the side.**

Recommended ages 8-16.

5b. Crossover Step Drill: Follow the same set-up as for the crossover step dry drill. Give all players a ball. The first player in line throws the ball to the coach, who rolls the ball back to the player 15 to 20 feet to their right or left. The player breaks with proper crossover step and fields the ball. The player keeps the ball and hustles to the back of the line. **This drill should be utilized for all players since all infielders use this technique frequently. It is fast moving, and will give players many repetitions in a short period of time. This drill keeps all players active.**

Recommended ages 8-16.



5-11: Drop step dry drill



5-12: Drop step dry drill

6. Reaction Drill Incorporating Drop and Cross Over Steps: Pair up players and place them in two separate lines 20 feet apart so that each player is facing his partner. Keep plenty of space between players in the same line so they can move freely. Give each player in one line a baseball. The coach stands behind the line of players without the baseballs. The receiving players start in the ready position. The coach controls the drill by pointing in which direction he wants the ball thrown. Point down and to the right for ground balls to the right side. Point up and to the right for fly balls over the right shoulder. Do the same thing for the left side. The coach monitors the receiving players and makes corrections when needed. After 5 to 10 repetitions, make the receiving players the throwers. The coach switches sides and repeats. **This drill is the next step after players have mastered the crossover step and drop-step drills. This drill can be utilized for all players, and it is a high-repetition drill that will keep all players active when coaching alone or with limited help.**

Recommended ages 8-16.

Drills – Fielding Ground Balls

7. Situation Ground Balls: Line up all outfielders in center field in a single file. Put the third baseman at his position and the shortstop as the relay man lined up to third. Put second baseman at second base. With a bucket of balls, the coach takes position between the mound and second base and yells out one of two situations, *No one on base* or *Man on first base*. Hit ground balls at various speeds and directions – either right at or to the side of the center fielders. Outfielders work on charging ground balls hard from initial steps, slowing down and getting under control to field the ball in proper position. If coach yells, *No one on base*, the player fields the ball as an infielder or goes down to one knee, then quickly squares up to second base, crow hops and makes a strong throw. If coach yells, *Man on first base*, the player charges hard, gets under control and fields ball like an infielder. Then he quickly squares up to third, crow hops and makes a strong throw chest high to the shortstop, who will cut it off if necessary. **This drill covers the key skills needed to field ground balls and throwing to the correct base or the relay man. It also allows the relay man to make decisions about relaying the ball to third base or cutting off the ball if proper communication skills are used between the third baseman and shortstop. This drill also teaches players to make decisions based on the game situation.**

Recommended ages 8-16.



- 8. Backing Up Drill:** Divide outfielders into two groups. Place one group in left-center field and the other in right-center field. The coach takes position between the mound and second base. Hit ground balls at various speeds into center field between the two outfield groups. Starting from the ready position, one outfielder from each group breaks for the ball. The outfielder who gets there first fields the ball with the other outfielder peeling off to back up the other outfielder once he realizes he cannot get to the ball first. Players backing up should be 20 to 30 feet behind the player fielding the ball. **This drill simulates game situations and gives the players a chance to work on their judgment skills. It also teaches players not to get too close to teammate when backing up a play.**

Recommended ages 8-16.

Drills – Catching Fly Balls

- 9. Live Fungo Drill:** Simply place all the outfielders at an outfield position. Utilize one player as a relay man or have the players throw to a base. The coach hits all types of fly balls to the players. After catching the ball the outfielders finishes the play by throwing the ball into the base or relay man. **There are many drills in this book that allow outfielders to get lots of repetition on catching fly balls. Most of these drills accomplish this by the coach throwing the ball, so players can work on their coordination of running and catching with out chasing poorly hit balls all over the field. This drill should be done often as players need to see live balls hit off a bat so they can develop skills for reading the swing and judging a hit ball.**



Recommended ages 8-16

- 10. Communication Drill:** Divide players into two separate lines. Lines should be 30 to 60 feet apart, depending on age level. Older players should be farther apart. The coach centers himself between the two lines, 30 to 60 feet in front of each. The coach then tosses high pop flies between and in front of the two lines. Starting from the ready position, the first player from each line breaks for the pop-up. The player who gets there first calls for the ball loudly at least two times. The player can call, *Ball, ball!* or *I got it, I got it!* The other player backs off to allow for the catch. Note: If both players calling for the ball becomes a problem, designate one line the center fielder's line and the other line the left fielder's line. The center fielder has priority over the left fielder, so if both players call for the ball, the center fielder stays with the catch. **This drill teaches players how to take charge and call for a ball. It also simulates a game situation that is seldom taught at practice.**

Recommended ages 8-16

- 11. Line Drive Drill:** Players stand 100 feet away from the coach. The coach throws or hits line drives directly at, in front of, or over the player's head. Players should remember to drop-step and freeze until they determine whether to come in, stay put or go back. Vary different types of balls without the player knowing so he can react and make the correct decision. **This drill assists players to make reads on difficult balls.**



Recommended ages 9-16.

GAMES

- 1. Glove Position:** Divide the team into two groups. Each group has a coach to toss balls and record the score of his team. The object of the game is to award points for players catching pop flies with the correct glove position (glove at 1 o'clock, two hands, thumb-to-thumb alignment). Award 10 points for a ball caught above the head with the correct glove position. Award five points for players getting glove in correct position but did not make the catch. Award one point for balls caught one-handed or basket style. Have each player in the group go five times. On the fifth round make it a bonus round. Award 15, 10 and five points respectively. Add up the points to see which team won. **Winners hit first at batting practice.**

Recommended ages 7-16.

- 2. Barrel Game:** Place all players in left, center or right field. The coach takes position between the mound and second base. The object of the game is to have the players throw the ball into the bucket on the fly or on one or two hops. Award 100 points for balls thrown into the bucket. Award 50 points for balls hitting the bucket. The coach can throw fly balls or roll ground balls to simulate a game situation. Have all players make three throws at the bucket. The player plays against the coaches. The coach picks the number of points the team must get in order to win the game. Make it a challenging but obtainable number for the team. **Play for five push-ups, or the losing group picks up the balls. Players love to beat the coaches.**

Recommended ages 8-16.

- 3. Football Drill Game:** The details of this drill can be read on page 52 in the Receiving chapter.

RECREATING GAME FLY BALLS AND GROUND BALLS

There is a balance in practicing. Remember the dry drills and the controlled reaction drills are excellent to work on technique and fundamentals and should be utilized often. Players also need some exposure to balls being hit at game speed and game distance. Spend time hitting fly balls and ground balls identical to what they might see in game conditions. It's just as important to place outfielders at their positions during live batting practice. This is, perhaps, a more accurate indicator of the balls players at that age level will see during game conditions.

