

## Softball – infield positions – playing shortstop

- Starting position is generally halfway between 3<sup>rd</sup> base and 2<sup>nd</sup> base and one step inside the baseline (toward home plate). This can depend on the batter though; for a hard-hitting batter, you may want to play a couple of steps behind the baseline (toward the outfield vs. toward home).
- Area of coverage includes from 2<sup>nd</sup> base to about halfway between 3<sup>rd</sup> base person's starting position.
- If a ball is hit between shortstop and 3<sup>rd</sup> base position, shortstop is trying to field the ball or backing up 3<sup>rd</sup> base person, if they are also trying to field it.
- Short stop will back up 3<sup>rd</sup> base in the following situations:
  - Throw to 3<sup>rd</sup> from the catcher to get a base runner on a steal or a hit.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> base is fielding a grounder.In every case, take an angle where you are running behind 3<sup>rd</sup> base person.
- Priority #1 is getting to the ball in your area you are defending before worrying about covering any base (except when the batter shows bunt).
- If there are one or more runners already on base, then know where the plays are before the ball is hit:
  - Runner on 2<sup>nd</sup>: Can look for a tag, throw directly to 3<sup>rd</sup> base if there is also a runner at 1<sup>st</sup> or otherwise be ready to get the out at 1<sup>st</sup> if that is the only good chance at an out.
  - Runner on 1<sup>st</sup> only:
    - If it's hit toward 2<sup>nd</sup> base position or 1<sup>st</sup> base, then run and cover 2<sup>nd</sup> base. Stay out of the baseline so you don't get hurt and you give your teammate an easier target. Can aim for an inside or outside corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> base with your foot.
    - If it's hit to you, look for a throw to 2<sup>nd</sup> base; the 2<sup>nd</sup> base person should be covering. If there is no good play there, then just get the out at 1<sup>st</sup>.
    - If the ball is not hit, run to 2<sup>nd</sup> base to cover a potential steal by the runner coming from 1<sup>st</sup>. You actually want to be fielding a throw directly in front of the base, so you can catch and make a quick tag before the runner can reach the base. Be ready to tag low; assume they will slide. Again, stay out of the baseline with your feet. When covering a steal, don't worry about stepping on the base; you have to tag them and trying to be on the base will just make the play more difficult.
- If you are covering 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> base and it turns out there is no play there, don't get in the runner's way or it is obstruction and the umpire can potentially award the runner an extra base.
- Slow rolling ball toward shortstop that the pitcher can't get to; run to this ball and look for the out at either 1<sup>st</sup> base or another base possibly, depending on other base runners.
- Know the situation in the game and where the ideal play is before the ball is hit. If the bases are loaded and less than two outs in a close game, your coach may want you to play in a few steps toward home and try to get the out at home plate. If the ball is hit to you and you aren't sure what to do, just get the out at 1<sup>st</sup> base.
- If the ball is hit out to left field, you are the cutoff person; take several steps out toward left field and either in line with 2<sup>nd</sup> base (2<sup>nd</sup> base person will cover), 3<sup>rd</sup> base, or home plate, depending on where you think the best play will be.
- Be ready to back up the pitcher in case there is a bad throw back from the catcher.
- When throwing to 3<sup>rd</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> from a short distance: Can use a quick, low underhand throw with no wind-up instead of overhand, to get the ball out quickly and make it more catchable for your teammate.
- During pitching warmups, right before the inning starts; pitcher's last warmup pitch, catcher will call out "ball's in, coming down"; shortstop will cover 2<sup>nd</sup> on a steal (practice) and 2<sup>nd</sup> base will back up.

Video link (8 minutes): Start at the 4:20 mark and go to 12:20:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yV0Cljuiz4o>