

INFIELD PHILOSOPHY

Our goal as coaches is to develop winning Division One baseball players. We must instill the importance of defense to a winning program. "Hitting wins games, but pitching and defense wins championships." A Pac-12 infielder must be fundamentally sound as well as mentally tough and confident in his own ability. If we are well prepared for the task at hand, we play with more confidence and are more relaxed. The following guidelines will help develop and prepare our infielders. Remember, the players are individuals, so be patient and try to find what works for each player.

SECTION I:
THE BASICS OF A COUGAR INFELDER

A. Pre-Pitch Fundamentals	3
B. Ground Balls	4
C. Fly Balls	5
D. Communication	6

IMPORTANCE OF DEFENSE

- 90% of games are finished and won with the defense making the last out on the field.
- The pitcher is an essential part of a team's defense.
- Team defense helps make each individual player better.
- Never let the pitcher struggle to do something. The defender should take charge and change the game momentum.
- Defend to help minimize damage – take the sure outs.
- Minimize damage with man on first base and two outs – no doubles, so play the line!
- Great plays are not supposed to be made all the time, that is what makes them great.
- A great defensive player turns outs into outs.
- A defender must focus on every pitch for a full 27 outs.
- 200 pitches during the course of the game equals roughly 10 minutes of total defensive concentration and focus time.

- Before the Pitch
 - Know where and what to do before the pitch is thrown.
 - Have some forward movement.
 - Anticipate where the ball will be hit.
 - Expect the ball to be hit to you every time.

- When the Ball is Hit
 - Read the hop.
 - Work through the ball.
 - Replace the feet for balance.
 - Throw strong overhead four-seam throws.

- When the Game Speeds Up
 - Stay within yourself.
 - Concentrate on one out at a time.
 - Catch the ball first then go to the next step.

- Pride
 - Do your job with pride.
 - On defense, don't ever think about your offense.
 - A defender should know that he can help the team win with his glove.

- Attitude
 - Field the ball with courage.
 - Throw the ball with courage.

WORK ROUTINE

Each player has a hitting routine to help him prepare for each game. Similarly, every infielder should develop a fielding routine to prepare for each game (i.e. backhands, count the hops, reads off the bat, etc.).

- Ground Balls
 - Quality over quantity.
 - 10 ground balls at you and to your left – develop good angles.
 - 10 ground balls to your backhand – must be as confident with backhand as you are with routine ground ball.
 - 10 reads off the batting practice hitter – helps anticipate and develops better jumps.
 - You can also have infielders throw to a bag when going through these work routines – amounts of ground balls will vary according to each player.
 - Each player should know what he needs to get ready for the game.
 - Double play depth
 - 10 ground balls to the left side.
 - 10 ground balls to the right side.
 - First basemen can take ground balls on or off the bag.
- Pre-Game Early Work
 - 20 – 6-4-3
 - 20 – 6-3 backhand
 - 15 – 5-4-3
 - 20 – 5-3
 - 20 – 4-6
 - 15 – 4-3 backhand
 - 20 – 3-6 played back
 - 20 – 3-6 played at bag
- Pre-Game Batting Practice
 - No early work – on the road.
 - 10 – 6-4-3
 - 10 – 5-4-3
 - 10 – 6-3
 - 10 – 5-3
 - 10 – 3-6
 - Balls played off the bat – get to as many as possible.
 - React to the ball no matter where it is hit.
- Infield Depths

- Depths vary according to player's ability, arm strength, speed of runner, and playing surfaces.
- Shortstop and Second Basemen
 - Back – normal position usually at the edge of the outfield grass.
 - Double play – approximately in the middle of normal depth and in.
 - Infield in, no outs – play further back according to the speed of the runner at third base; force the runner to see the ground ball through the infield yet still be able to make a play at home if he goes on contact.
 - In – edge of infield grass; must be in position to throw the runner out at home.
- First and Third Basemen
 - Back – off the line and behind the bag.
 - Double play – normal position.
 - Infield in, no outs – play further back according to the speed of the runner at third base; force the runner to see the ground ball through the infield yet still be able to make a play at home if he goes on contact.
 - In – even or in front of the bag depending on the speed of the runner.
 - No doubles – guarding the line, behind the bag; ball can't get down the line.
- Starting Position
 - Some sort of movement is essential for every infielder prior to every pitch.
 - It will vary from infielder to infielder.
 - Comfortable, relaxed and balanced.
 - In order to maximize first step quickness, player must find an approach that gets him to the balls of his feet and not back on his heels or flat footed.
 - Infielders should be in position to delect when pitch enters the hitting zone.
 - Split step
 - Similar to the position of a tennis player as they are about to return serve.
 - Time the pitcher as he delivers the ball home and step forward with the right foot.
 - Now bring the left foot forward with a slight hop.
 - Weight should be on balls of feet, knees bent, in good athletic position.
 - Make sure your weight is distributed and you are not too far forward on your toes.
 - Both feet should just be hitting the ground as the ball enters the hitting zone.
 - Do not be off the ground when ball is hit.
 - Walk-in
 - Time the pitch and take a comfortable step with right foot – left foot for lefthanders.
 - Now bring other leg forward, ending up in a balanced and ready position.
 - Make sure you're not late on the pitch, and you're not moving forward as the ball enters the hitting zone.
 - Simple Sway
 - Take a nice comfortable position – weight on balls of feet, balanced, knees bent,

- ready to react.
 - As the ball approaches the hitting zone, a slight swaying action readies the body to react.
- Vision
 - When the pitcher is releasing the ball the infielders eyes should shift to the hitting area go get the best read of the ball off the bat.
- Preparation
 - Set-up (discussed above).
 - Concentrate on every pitch.
 - Don't take any ground balls for granted, maintain concentration throughout the whole play.
 - Keep your hands and body relaxed, with your mind alert and aggressive.
 - Keeping hands and body relaxed will:
 - Allow hands to be softer.
 - Allow hand to react more quickly.
 - React aggressively but under control on the first step to the ball.
 - Use crossover step when lateral movement is necessary.
 - Have body under control on the last step to the ball.
 - When possible, play the ball out in front of you.
 - Don't be hesitant to backhand the ball when it is necessary.
 - Learn how to create angles on the ball, depending on the speed of the ball – this will increase your range.

FIELDING THE GROUND BALL

APPROACHING THE GROUND BALL

When fielders get beat by ground balls it usually happens at the end or the last hop. This is usually because of improper fielding technique and improper approach to the ball. A proper fielding technique will slow the ball down or, in other words, let you feel like you have a lot of time. This will allow the fielder to get a good read on the ball and put his body in proper position to field so that if the ball does do something at the end when it gets to him, he will still be able to field it.

- Once the ball is hit, establish your angle on the ball – this depends on the speed of the ball.
- Establishing proper angle will:
- Be under control on last step to the ball by breaking down with bent knees and ankles with your butt down.
- Hands should be out in front of the body.
- You can't catch what you can't see – keep your eyes and head on the ball.
- See the ball into the glove.
- Have relaxed hands – do not jab or stab at the ball.
- Have your glove down to work up when fielding the ball – glove below the level of the ball. This will allow you to have glove in position if ball stays down and if ball takes a bad hop at the end you will be

in position to react quickly up to field the ball.

- While fielding you are much quicker reacting from a down to up position.
- Work to have everything in one fluid motion as you are working through the ball.
- As your fielding the ball work the glove and ball to your throwing hand side.

THROWING

- Set your feet.
- Close your front shoulder and lock your head on the target.
- Get your arm up in a good L position to stay on top of the baseball.
- Use your legs with a slight flex in your knees.
- When possible, grip the ball with 4 seams to create better carry on the throw.
- To create accuracy, always throw to a spot or a target when practicing.
- Player should never watch the flight of the ball – instead he should watch the target all the way.
- All plays cannot be made with a throw over the top – work on different arm angles on specific ground balls.
- Don't rush yourself – be under control.

INFIELD BASICS

- Know situation, inning and score.
- Make sure to know the number of outs.
- Know where you are going with the ball if it's hit to you.
- Determining the speed of the ground ball and knowing the speed of both the hitter and base runner will determine where you will throw the ball.
- Have an idea on how to play each hitter.
- Know the catcher's signs, and which is the hot sign with a runner at second base.
- Go back on all pop flies aggressively until an outfielder calls you off.
- Be aggressive on all foul balls and pop flies in the home plate area.
- Don't hide the ball on double play feeds.
- Know the range of all infielders playing next to you.
- Use pop fly priority system.
- Know the arm strength of all your outfielders.
- Know the speed of your hitter (blue, green, yellow, gray).
- Should you boot the ball, stay with it and use your bare hand.
- Know the signs and all your responsibilities on pick-offs, bunt plays, double steals, rundowns, cut-offs, and relays.
- Communicate - know the wind, sun, playing surface.
- Play aggressively without fear of failure.
- Always think two on double plays.
- Be aggressive on ground balls - don't wait back.
- Play the hop, not the ground ball.

- Always anticipate every ground ball being hit to you.

POSITIONING

A huge part of the game of baseball is proper positioning for each situation. There are many variables that will dictate the position of the infielders during the game:

- Situation
- Inning
- Score
- Outs
- Hitter
- Pitcher on the Mound
- Runner

As the various infield positions are discussed, various situations will be mentioned that could dictate the position each infielder may take.

SECTION II:
SPECIFIC POSITION RESPONSIBILITIES

A. First Baseman	10
B. Second Baseman	11
C. Shortstop	15
D. Third Baseman	18
E. Utility Infielder	20

FIRST BASEMAN

POSITION ATTRIBUTES

- Plus attributes off the bag
 - Good flexibility in hips – allows them to move laterally well and to work underneath the baseball, which is important on a corner.
 - Quickness of reactions, quickness of feet – this quickness affords them the ability to react to sharply hit balls, and gives them plus range that allows them to play well off of the base or very deep, which provides more flexibility in defensive positioning.
 - Soft hands
 - Can backhand balls proficiently – enhances range.
 - Are willing to play well off of the bag – not concerned about moving while a throw is still in the air.
 - They have the ability to throw from different angles and arm slots – they don't stand up to throw the ball to 2nd for a potential double play. They throw from where they fielded the ball in order to save time.
 - Aggressive – will put pressure on bunt plays with runners on 1st or runners on 1st and 2nd. Comfortable getting right on top of hitters on bunt plays. Will throw to 3rd to knock down lead runner. They will take control of pop ups to the pitcher and to the catcher. They can go down the line or in foul territory aggressively.
 - Will look to turn two – able to give up the ball on a double play and begin their move back to the bag at essentially the same time.
- Plus attributes on the bag
 - They show quick reactions and quick lateral movement when coming off the bag
 - Pick well – understand when to go out and get the ball and when to give with the hands.
 - Have length around the bag – huge difference in the receiving radius they can create.
 - Are able to navigate the bag well with their feet – they show agility and lightness on their feet.
 - Have a feel for staying on the bag or coming off – you will see inexperienced first baseman come off the bag at the last second when they should have come off early and tried to apply a tag or come off early and tried to get back to the bag.
 - They have the ability to throw from different angles and arm slots – they don't stand up to throw the ball to 2nd for a potential double play. They throw from where they fielded the ball in order to save time.
 - Comfortable receiving pick off throws from the pitcher and applying a quick tag.
- Instinctive / Well versed with the position
 - Understand situations that they might encounter at the position
 - Understand how/when to charge the ball, or when not to – which is almost always the case at first base. Poor first baseman often charge balls and make them into tough plays. Ideally, you want to field the ball just as it bounces or at its apex. You will often time see guys try to field balls that end up handcuffing them when there was no reason for them to charge the ball. They panic. Typically, there is never a reason for a first baseman to be charging a ball aggressively.

- They do not go chasing after many soft hit balls to their right – have a feel for letting the second baseman and pitchers go after soft hit balls/push bunts in no man’s land. The pitcher is typically not going to be able to cover 1st base, so the only chance you might have is for the first baseman to stay home.
- On pick offs from left handed pitchers, they go out and get the ball, creating a throwing lane – often times first baseman do not do this, hitting the runner. This is squarely the fault of the first baseman.
- In tune with counts and game dynamics and position themselves / anticipate plays accordingly.
- Negative Attributes
 - Coordination / agility lacking
 - Stiff hands
 - Clumsy
 - Very stationary overall
 - Tentative – will not get the lead runner at second very often, and will not attack with bunts.
 - Feet really limit throwing accuracy
 - Don’t react quickly on picks from the pitcher – are not comfortable receiving pick off throws.
 - Slow to give up the ball on a double play.
 - Chase too many balls into no man’s land.
 - Charge balls and end up handcuffing themselves.
 - Can’t throw from multiple angles.
- 70-80s
 - Plus to plus, plus range
 - Aggressive
 - Will take charge in the infield
 - Accurate throwers who are not afraid to throw
 - Will throw from varied slots
 - Instinctive and understand the position
 - Agile around the base
 - Soft hands
- 50-60s
 - Average to plus range
 - Sure hands – will catch what he can get to
 - Capable around the base
 - Potentially former plus, plus defenders who have slowed with age
 - Guys with length around the bag but who might not have the greatest range
 - Can throw from different slots

POSITION TECHNIQUES

- Footwork
 - Get to the bag with your knees bent facing the infielder making the throw.
 - Right-handed first baseman touches the bag with right foot and stretches out with the left.

- See the flight of the ball then stretch towards it.
- Depending on where the ball is thrown you can slide left or right on the base with your foot.
- Ball thrown to the right, go to the far right of the bag and cross over stretch.
- To the left you may need to come off the bag and tag the runner with a sweep tag.
- Ball in dirt stretch as far as possible and try to get the short hop.
- Stay on the base and pick every ball unless situations dictate you come off the base and block the ball to keep it in front of you.
- On high throws you may use the bag to catch the ball then step off into fair territory.
- Groundball to First Base
 - First baseman should take all ground balls himself when possible, waving pitcher off.
 - If unable to beat the runner to the bag, flip the ball to the pitcher covering first base.
 - Flip the ball underhand and throw it like you are throwing a glass of milk.
 - Stay low, show ball, and follow flip with your feet.
 - Try to give the ball to the pitcher before he hits the base - this will make it easier for him.
 - Ball hit to his right should be thrown overhand chest high, leading the pitcher a little bit.
- Holding Runners On
 - Right foot on inside of base.
 - Left foot inside foul line.
 - Knees bent with glove presenting a good target.
 - Take throw and make good hard tag.
 - If pitcher goes home, take first step off base with right foot then shuffle - this will square you up with the hitter. Stay low focusing on the hitting zone to get a good read of ball off bat.
 - Play behind a runner who doesn't run well and go back on the pitch.
 - Play back if the runner is inconsequential - don't care if he steals.
- 3-6 Double Play
 - Holding runner on and ball hit at him or to his right - throw is made on the inside of second base.
 - Get to the bag to take the return throw.
 - Communicate with the pitcher that you have the bag "I'VE GOT BAG!"
 - Ball to his left step on the base and throw to second base yelling "TAG!"
 - When playing behind the runner - throw is made to the outside of second base.
- Bunts
 - Runner on First Base
 - Take three or four steps in and read the bunt.
 - If bunted hard call off the pitcher and field the bunt.
 - Be aggressive in fielding bunts - you have priority over the pitcher at all times.
 - Runner on Second Base

- Charge in a few steps further off the line.
 - Come under control when bunt is made.
 - Your responsibility is first base line to the mound when playing "out".
 - Your responsibility is any bunted ball when playing "lead out".
 - Work from the line towards the mound to gain momentum when in "lead out".
- Relays
 - With runner at first base and any ball hit for extra bases down right field line, trail the second baseman 10-20 yards for relay throw.
 - Line up off right shoulder of second baseman in fair territory.
 - Cut-Offs
 - The first baseman is the cut-off man on throws from the left center gap to right field.
 - With runners at first base and a ball hit in the gaps or down the left field line and a sure double, the first baseman should act as the last line of defense on the relay throw to the plate allowing himself to be in position between the mound and home plate, and in line with the throw, to redirect the baseball to third base if there is no play at the plate and the trail runner is advancing.
 - It is important the first baseman remembers the following:
 - Relay = cut the ball and throw to the base you are lined up with.
 - Cut = cut the ball and attack the trail runner.
 - Nothing = If you here nothing let the ball go.
 - Make decisions on balls off-line or dying - you decide to cut the ball in both instances.
 - Communication
 - Let pitcher know if you're playing behind the runner.
 - Priority over catcher on pop-ups.
 - Let pitcher know your taking it yourself.
 - Double with man on first let second baseman know where the throw goes.
 - Talk to pitcher, let him know the situation.
 - Communicate on bunts.
 - Let catcher know runner is stealing: "GOING!"
 - Point out pop-ups.

SECOND BASEMAN

The second baseman should be tough, both mentally and physically. He should be constantly communicating with his teammates. He and the shortstop should have the best on-field relationship. Be a leader on the field!

- Approach
 - Every defensive player should have some type of pre-pitch movement.
 - It could be creeping in as the pitcher goes into his delivery.

- Another is swaying back and forth like a tennis player waiting for serve.
- If you're a creeper, start where you'll end up at the correct fielding depth.
- When the ball nears the hitting zone our weight should be on the balls of your feet, knees flexed, hands relaxed, ready for the batted ball.
- Your focus should be on the hitting zone to get the best read off the bat.

- Fielding
 - Field the ball out front.
 - Feet spread a little wider than shoulders width, backside down, bend at the knees with your hands out front.
 - Stay low and look the ball into the glove.
 - Bring it to your throwing hand side, make the exchange and step and throw.
 - Second basemen usually have more time - don't challenge the runner.
 - Make firm throws to first giving the first baseman time to tag runner or get back to base if throw is off-line.
 - Grip the ball with four seams.
 - Be consistent in your approach.
 - Play **aggressively** but **intelligently** and make the **routine plays**.

- Double Play Feeds
 - Draw imaginary line between your belly button and home plate.
 - Anything hit from that line to the right is a flip.
 - Anything hit from that line to the left is one of the following feeds:
 - Backhand Toss
 - Movement must be towards second base.
 - Show the ball so shortstop can see it.
 - Make good firm feed with firm wrist - don't sling it.
 - Follow your feed - one or two steps toward second base after flip.
 - Underhand Flip
 - Show ball early to shortstop.
 - Stay low.
 - Follow through towards second base.
 - Toss should be firm and chest high.
 - Firm wrist and don't sling.
 - Ball Firmly Hit at You
 - Plant left foot and either slightly drop right foot or open right foot to free hips.
 - Catch the ball - then be quick.
 - Pivot and stay low with short arm action - make firm throw.
 - Pivot - ball hit a little to your left
 - Field with either one or two hands.

- Preferably with one hand to free body up while trying to pivot feet.
- After fielding the ground ball, quickly shift feet by replacing left foot with right foot.
- Reverse
 - Ball to left where second baseman must glove it going away from base.
 - Field off left foot and replace your left foot with your right foot.
- Take It Yourself
 - Say "I GOT IT".
 - Step on second base with your right foot and throw to first base.
- Slow Hit Ball - come in, tag runner and throw to first base.
 - If runner stops run at him and throw to first base.
 - Get runner in a rundown.
 - If runner tries to go around you make one good attempt to tag him then throw to first base.
- Pivots
 - There are a few different ways to turn the double play.
 - The most important factor is the second baseman's comfort with his way of doing it.
 - The player's first priority is to get to the bag quickly and be under control - he must position himself to do so.
 - Second, he must see the ball in flight before he reacts to it.
 - Work to get your feet set quickly - you can't get rid of the ball until your feet are set.
 - Work to shift your feet so the exchange takes place in the chest area.
 - Coming across the bag, staying behind the bag, or going in front of the bag:
 - Get to the bag.
 - Put left foot on back-front corner of the bag - this protects against a throw up and inside the baseline.
 - See flight of ball - shift weight to right foot as you are catching the ball.
 - Plant right foot - step to first base with left foot pointing towards first base and throw.
 - Stay light on your feet - don't get planted.
 - This is the easiest way to turn the double play.
 - It allows you to be protected from the incoming runner.
 - Also the umpire can see you have touched the bag.
 - By waiting to see the ball in flight you stay under control and can stay on the bag longer and not leave too soon.
 - A short step towards first base with your left foot puts you in position to make a quick throw.
- Slow Roller
 - This is probably the toughest play a second baseman will have to make - charging the ball, fielding it off your left foot and throwing off your right.

- Balls that stay low will be thrown across your body, so adjust your throw.
- With balls waist high or higher you can turn shoulders (square them up to first) to the target and make a firm 3/4 or side arm throw.
- Bunts
 - With runners on first or runners on first and second, the second baseman covers first base.
 - Creep in, shuffle, then break to first base making sure not to give up on the slash bunt.
- Relays and Cut-offs
 - Second baseman covers first base on a single to center or right field and a runner on second base who is trying to score.
 - Second baseman is lead man on all double cuts on ball hit in right center gap or down the right field line.
 - Don't go out any further than you have to, make a strong throw to the base you are lined up to.
 - Give good target to the outfielders - arms up yelling "hit me hit me"
 - High or low throws you can't handle, let them go through to the trailer.
 - Catch relay throw in throwing position with momentum moving towards base you are throwing to.
 - You should be peaking in to line up and to get an idea of where the runner is.
 - Don't depend on the trail man.
 - Second baseman is trail man on all extra base hits to left center gap or down the left field line.
 - Trail shortstop about 10 to 12 yards.
 - Help line him up to the base the throw will go to.
 - If shortstop can't handle the throw step up and catch the ball with your momentum moving towards the base you are throwing to.
 - Terminology: one, two, three and four (repeatedly).
 - When you are trail man, think like you are the lead man - expect the throw.
- Communication
 - Let first baseman know when off speed pitch is coming.
 - Let the pitcher know who has second base on a double play ball hit back to him.
 - Tell outfielders how many outs there are.
 - Point out pop-ups and fly balls during twilight.
 - Let the pitcher know who is holding the runner at second base and which looks or rhythms series you are using through the sign system.
 - Communicate with shortstop on who is covering second base on a steal:
 - Open mouth = you
 - Closed mouth = me
 - Cover mouth with glove.

SHORTSTOP

The shortstop should be a leader on the field, always communicating with his teammates. Be consistent, make the routine plays. Think ahead and always anticipate the ball being hit to you. Play aggressively, but under control.

- Approach
 - Every defensive player should have some type of pre-pitch movement.
 - It could be creeping in as the pitcher goes into his delivery.
 - Another is swaying back and forth like a tennis player waiting for serve.
 - If you're a creeper, start where you'll end up at the correct fielding depth.
 - When the ball nears the hitting zone our weight should be on the balls of your feet, knees flexed, hands relaxed, ready for the batted ball.
 - Your focus should be on the hitting zone to get the best read off the bat.
 - Be consistent with your setup.

- Fielding
 - Field the ball out front.
 - Feet spread a little wider than shoulders width, backside down, bend at the knees with your hands out front and relaxed.
 - Stay low and look the ball into the glove.
 - Bring it to your throwing hand side, make the exchange and step and throw.
 - Stay in rhythm and throw - crow hop, rhythm step.
 - Play the hop, don't let the hop play you.
 - Grip the ball with four seams.
 - Slow rollers should be charged fielding the ball off your left leg and throwing off your right.
 - Play **aggressively** but **intelligently** and make the **routine plays**.

- Pivots
 - From the Second Baseman
 - Shortstop must be in position to get to the bag in time and receive the throw.
 - As you get close to second, break down and always expect a bad throw.
 - When you see flight of the ball, go towards the ball swiping the back corner of the base with the right foot, or use the right foot to push off the bag to clear yourself even further from the sliding runner.
 - Then, pivot and throw.
 - Crow hop after the throw to clear yourself of the sliding runner.
 - Be light on your feet after you release the ball.
 - From the First Baseman
 - If the first baseman fields the ball in front of the base take the throw inside with your left foot on the base.
 - Push off the base, plant your right foot and throw.

- If the first baseman fields the ball behind the bag, take the throw outside with your right foot swiping the back corner.
 - Get to the base and give him a good target.
 - Take It Yourself
 - Hit the bag with the left foot on the back of the base, throw to first, and crow hop.
 - Let the second baseman know by saying “I GOT IT”
 - From the Pitcher
 - Know who has the throw on a comebacker to the pitcher.
 - Get to the inside of the base, with the left foot on the base.
 - This helps protect you against a throw up the line inside of the base line.
 - After making all throws be light on your feet in case the runner gets to you.
- Double Play Feeds
 - Position yourself so if the ball is hit to your left you will underhand flip.
 - Stay low and follow your flip.
 - Make all flips firmly, using a stiff wrist.
 - Draw an imaginary line from your belly button to home plate.
 - Anything from the line to the left is a flip.
 - Anything from the line to the right or the back hand side, plant the right foot and drop the left foot back.
 - Ball hit right at you or to your left where you can get in front of it, open the left foot a little to free the hips and pivot.
 - Throw the ball from where you catch it – field it low, stay low and throw chest high.
 - Ball hit to the backhand, plant the right foot and drop left foot back.
 - If you can’t plant the right foot use backhand flip feed to second baseman.
- Slow Rollers
 - Charge and field the ball off your left foot, then throw off your right.
 - Throw will likely tail on you so make an adjustment.
 - Make this play with either one or two hands, whichever is more comfortable.
 - Field the ball off to the right side when going down with two hands and outside the left foot when fielding the ball with one hand.
- Bunts
 - Runner on First
 - Shortstop covers second base.
 - Runner on First and Second
 - Shortstop plays off the left pocket of the runner on both plays.
 - Out play – glove flip to pitcher then cover second base on the bunt.
 - Lead Out play – “back” call to pitcher then cover second base on the bunt.

- Relays and Cut-offs
 - Ball hit to right center gap.
 - Shortstop is the trailer behind the second baseman on extra base hit to right center.
 - Quickly get out and in position to help second baseman line up and let him know where the throw should go.
 - Shortstop wants to be 10 to 12 yards behind the second baseman.
 - If the second baseman can't handle the throw, shortstop will move up to take the throw.
 - Low throw, shortstop will move up and get it on a good hop.
 - If it's a high throw, shortstop will move up and catch it in the air.
 - Ball hit to left center gap or left field line.
 - Shortstop is the lead man and the second baseman is the trail man.
 - Give the outfielders a good target by raising your arms.
 - Try to catch throw from the outfielder with momentum towards the base you are throwing to.
 - All throws should be received in fair territory on balls hit down the lines and into the comers.
 - Ball hit straight to left, center or right field.
 - Shortstop is the cut-off man on throw from left, center and right field to third base on singles with a runner on first.
 - Knowing your outfielders arms will help you position yourself so that all throws arrive chest high.
 - If nothing is said, let the ball go through. Take charge on throws dying or tailing off line.
 - Shortstop covers third base on ball hit to left field and runner on second base.
 - Third baseman is the cut-off man on base hit to left with man on second.
 - First baseman is the cut-off man on all other balls.
 - Ball hit down the right field line with man on first
 - The second baseman is the relay man while the first baseman trails about 20 yards (still on the infield dirt or at the edge of the outfield grass).
 - Shortstop hovers between second and third
 - Terminology
 - Relay – cut and relay throw to the base you are lined up with.
 - Cut – cut the throw and attack the trail runner.
 - Nothing – if nothing is said, let the throw go through.
- Communication
 - Always remind the outfielders how many outs there are.
 - Let first baseman know who will take the throw on a pick-off.

- Let pitcher know who has the throw on a double play feed.
- Know who has the throw on a steal.
- Let second baseman know where to throw on a relay.
- Let third baseman know when off speed pitch is coming.

THIRD BASEMAN

- Approach
 - Every defensive player should have some type of pre-pitch movement.
 - It could be creeping in as the pitcher goes into his delivery.
 - Another is swaying back and forth like a tennis player waiting for serve.
 - If you're a creeper, start where you'll end up at the correct fielding depth.
 - When the ball nears the hitting zone our weight should be on the balls of your feet, knees flexed, hands relaxed, ready for the batted ball.
 - Your focus should be on the hitting zone to get the best read off the bat.
 - Be consistent with your setup.
- Fielding
 - Field the ball out front.
 - Feet spread a little wider than shoulders width, backside down, bend at the knees with your hands out front and relaxed.
 - Stay low and look the ball into the glove.
 - Bring it to your throwing hand side, make the exchange and step and throw.
 - Stay in rhythm and throw - crow hop, rhythm step.
 - Play the hop, don't let the hop play you.
 - Slow rollers should be charged fielding the ball off your left leg and throwing off your right.
 - Play **aggressively** but **intelligently** and make the **routine plays**.
 - Know the opposing players – can he run? Will he bunt?
 - Take away the bunt by moving in and a step towards the line.
 - Bare hand bunts only if the ball has stopped moving or is barely moving.
 - When going to your left field everything unless the shortstop calls you off.
- Throwing
 - Step towards your target
 - Grip ball across the seams – four seam grip (more accuracy and velocity).
 - Throw over the top or $\frac{3}{4}$.
 - Better to make a low throw than a high one – first baseman can only jump so high but can pick everything.
- Slow Rollers
 - Charge and field the ball off your left foot, then throw off your right.

- Throw will likely tail on you so make an adjustment.
- Make this play with either one or two hands, whichever is more comfortable.
- Field the ball off to the right side when going down with two hands and outside the left foot when fielding the ball with one hand.
- Bunts
 - No One On
 - Play in against the drag with no one on and no one out – leadoff batter.
 - Play in against the drag at all times when a left-handed hitter is facing a left-handed pitcher.
 - Play in against the drag when the scouting report indicates the player likes to drag.
 - Runner on First
 - Play in.
 - When batter squares around, charge in and break down under control when ball is bunted.
 - Catcher will let you know where to throw the ball, however we will be in “Out” 99% of the time so the throw will go to first base.
 - If they’re giving us an out get one!
 - The best defense on someone who might bunt is take the bunt away.
 - Runner on First and Second
 - Play in with a two-step read once the ball is bunted.
 - Read the bunt.
 - If pitcher can’t make the play call him off and make the play – be aggressive and get the out!
 - If pitcher is able to make the play get back to third base for “lead out” or trail runner.
 - If pitcher hears nothing from you he will keep coming and make the play, therefore be loud when calling him off.
 - Out Play – take the out at first base and come get the ball.
 - Lead Out Play – would like to get the runner at third base, but at the very least get an out. When in doubt go to first.
- Relays and Cut-offs
 - The third baseman is the cut-off man on a base hit to left field and a runner at second base.
 - Be even with the pitching rubber when lining up to home plate.
 - Terminology
 - Relay – cut and relay throw to the base you are lined up with.
 - Cut – cut the throw and attack the trail runner.
 - Nothing – if nothing is said, let the throw go through.
- Communication
 - Let the pitcher know the situation

- Call the pitcher off loudly on bunt play.
- Let the pitcher know he's got the line when you are playing deep.
- Priority over catcher and pitcher on all pop-ups.
- Know all the defensive plays and signals.

UTILITY INFIELDBER

The utility infielder may go three to five days without stepping on the field. In order to have success, the utility infielder:

- Must be very self-disciplined.
- Must take ground balls at all the positions he can play and not be afraid to try some positions he can't play naturally.
- Must know all the assignments on all of the bunt plays, relays, first and third situations, etc.
- Must come to the ballpark every day expecting to play.
- Must develop a routine that prepares him for each game.
- Must pay attention at all times to the scoreboard, opponents, situations, and the manager.
- Must always stay upbeat and positive, rooting teammates on.
- Must get as much early and extra work as possible to stay sharp.

SECTION III:
THE CRITERIA OF A COUGAR INFELDER

A. Fundamental Criteria	22
B. Infield Play Yearly Progression	22
C. Infield Drills	24

FUNDAMENTAL CRITERIA FOR INFELDERS

- Pre-ready and Ready Positions
- Aggressiveness
- Feet
- Hands

- Transfer
- Glove Work
- Anticipation
- Arm Strength
- Reads & Jumps
- Balance
- Throwing Accuracy
- Agility
- Angles or Routes
- Awareness
- Arm Angle

INFIELD PLAY YEARLY PROGRESSION

It is very important for everyone to understand that most of the players coming into college baseball do not have an understanding of the fundamentals. Patience and a lot of communication are keys between coaches and the players. Take time to learn about the players, their background, attitudes, strengths, fears, etc. The more we learn about our players and the more they learn about us, the more trust they will have in our ability to teach. Teach good work habits, sound fundamentals and keep it simple.

YEAR ONE

- Introduction to running, conditioning, and weight training program (introduction to proper warm- up routine).
- Respect for work schedules – be on time to stretch, BP, and treatment.
- Develop good work habits – early work, extra stretch, equipment check.
- Understand mental toughness – no fear of failure, no excuses, separate the offense from the defense.
- Introduce bunt defense – know assignment and purpose of each play.
- Introduce cut-offs and relays – importance of communication, trailer expect bad throw.
- Introduce first and third defense – explain main priority on each play.
- Teach proper pop-up priorities.
- Teach how and when to hold runners.
- Teach tag plays – pop, sweep, swipe.
- Explain coverage on steals – open and closed mouth communication.
- Teach proper fielding technique:
 - Starting Position – comfortable, relaxed, balanced.
 - Aggressiveness – play through the ball.
 - Feet – use footwork to help get in proper throwing and fielding position.
 - Hands – must be relaxed in order to be quick and soft.
 - Transfer – take ball out of glove with other hand, don't flip ball from glove hand.

- Glove Work – field ball pinkie to thumb on backhands.
- Anticipation – expect every ball to be hit to you, know where to go with the ball.
- Reads and Jumps – concentrate on the hitting zone, know what pitch is being thrown.
- Teach proper throwing mechanics.
 - Grip – try to hold the ball across the seams – four seam grip.
 - Strength/Accuracy – use of legs and back, point elbow and shoulder to target, don't rush.
 - Arm Angle – learn to throw from different angles.
- Establish field awareness – play the scoreboard, wind, sun, speed of runners, etc.
- Teach double play pivot – use of bag, importance of good feeds, think aggressively.
- Discuss the importance of developing a daily work routine – backhands, counting hops, reads off the bat during BP, etc.
- Learn to play other positions – versatility is very important.
- Learn to respect the umpire.

YEAR TWO

- Continue to instruct, but start expecting execution of mechanics and fundamentals introduced in Year One.
- Developing a better understanding of all fundamentals, technique and mental approach covered in Year One.
- Re-enforce the importance of good work habits and routines on a daily basis that help players to prepare for games.
- Learn to become a good self-evaluator and motivator.
- Continue to develop good working relationships with umpires.
- Take pride in your defense.

YEAR THREE

- Continue to improve upon all fundamentals and techniques.
- Develop and understand the importance of all mental aspects of the game.
- Become more consistent at execution of all fundamentals.
- Being prepared for and understanding role.
- Begin to understand how to use umpires to increase our chance to win.

YEAR FOUR

- Should have a complete understanding of the importance of defense to a winning team.
- Should be very consistent in all phases of the game – physically, fundamentally, and mentally.
- Should have developed a positive no fear attitude.
- Should come to the ballpark with one goal in mind – what can I do to help our team win today.

INFIELD DRILLS

- Short Hop Drill
 - This drill can be done with a partner 15-20 feet apart or along against a wall.
 - With a partner, both players get in a good fielding position – butt down, hands out front.
 - Throw firm hops to one another.
 - Throw short hops in front, to the glove side, and to the backhand side.

- Hand Drill
 - This drill can be done with a partner standing 15-20 feet apart or alone against a wall.
 - With a partner each player throws to other.
 - Work on getting rid of the ball and throwing it to the other fielder as quickly as possible.
 - Works their hands and feet.

- Long Hop Drill
 - This drill can be done with a partner, coach, or machine.
 - The infielder should start in the fielding position with his glove on the ground.
 - The glove side leg is in a drop step position with the glove inside the leg when on the ground.
 - With the coach or machine approximately 50 feet away, long hops should be thrown to the fielder to simulate one hop line drives.
 - The fielder should start with his glove in contact with the ground.
 - He does not bring his glove up to catch the ball until after the ball has hopped.
 - Working on the fundamental of glove down work up.

- Box Drill
 - This drill is done with four fielders forming a square box standing approximately 30 feet apart from each other.
 - Players throw to one another around the box.
 - First, each player takes the throw and quickly gets rid of the ball and throws to the man on his left.
 - Then they reverse it and each player catches and throws the ball, like a shortstop on a double play, to the man on his right.

- Knee Drill
 - This drill is done with the infielder on his knees and a fungo hitter with a bucket of balls standing at least 30 feet away.
 - The fungo hitter hits the fielder ground balls and he fields them while on his knees, using one hand.
 - Balls can be hit in front, to glove side, or to backhand side.

- Four Corner Drill
 - Hit slow rollers or balls directly at them.
 - Position four players in a square about 90 feet from each other.

- Player with the ball starts by rolling it to his left.
- That player fields it and throws it to the player diagonally across from him.
- The drill continues with the ball always being rolled to the player's left and thrown diagonally.

- Relay Drill
 - Have infielders get in a straight line about 120 feet apart.
 - Start at one end with the ball and work to the other end using good footwork and exchange.

- Double Play Drills
 - Roll balls to both shortstop and second baseman having each of them work on all the various techniques of turning double plays.
 - Same goes for first baseman.

- Pop Up Drills
 - Get infielders used to playing with sunglasses by having them wear them in this drill.

- No Glove Drill
 - Field ground balls isolating footwork only.
 - Focus is on getting your feet in position to field the ball efficiently and with momentum in the direction of the throw.

- Fungo Glove Down Drill
 - Have the infielder start with his glove on the ground.
 - Have the fungo hitter hit balls right at the infielder.
 - He must keep his glove in contact with the ground until he catches it.
 - If the fungo is hit slightly to the left or right side the fielder must maintain contact with the ground with his glove.
 - This gets the infielder to understand the feel of glove down and work up.

- Fungo Glove Down Drill with Drop Step
 - Same procedures as Fungo Glove Down Drill but with a drop step when the ball is hit (Left foot drop with right hander and right foot drop with left hander).
 - Glove arm stays inside drop step leg - it's not "olay".
 - This teaches the infielder how to create a longer hop when he is getting caught in between and also give him a longer look at the ball.