

Skills required to play baseball demand players to react quickly. Considering the basic instinct to react, we are talking about split-second timing. This is the one area every player can improve. Playing any defensive position except catcher, the first two steps the player takes are critical if he is going to be successful. Quickness is also important in base running. Again the first two steps are vital. Getting out of the batters' box quickly can make the difference of being safe or out on a play at first base. A batter needs quick hands to get the bat speed required to be successful. The pitcher needs to have a quick release to hold runners on base. A quick release also helps the catcher to throw out base runners who are attempting to steal a base.

Every infielder must strive to achieve the following. He must have: (1) the correct attitude, (2) excellent sensory perception, (3) good rhythm with all ground balls, (4) proper mechanics, and (5) the ability to make the plays. Once he has developed these five areas, he must never settle for anything short of perfection.

Every infielder must desire to be involved in all 21 outs. His ATTITUDE should be to demand that every ground ball be hit to him. He is so confident in his fielding abilities that he knows every ground ball hit to him will result in an out. Therefore, if 21 ground balls are hit to him, no errors will be committed, and his team will be in a great position to win. He takes every ground ball personally, as if he were in a prizefight for the championship of the world. His confident attitude forces him to believe that there is no ground ball which can get by him, that he will get to the ball and throw the runner out. This is a highly competitive attitude, which puts the infielder in the correct frame of mind. Never should an infielder take on the attitude of fear or apprehension; rather, he should have an attitude of confidence and courage.

The jump an infielder gets on a batted ball is directly proportional to his level of SENSORY PERCEPTION. A good infielder will read a batted ball with both sight and sound. This ability enables the infielder to gauge the speed and direction of the batted ball. Most infielders will move, even on balls that are swung on and missed. This is due to their visual perception of pitch location and bat angle. The sound of the ball coming off the bat allows the infielder to make judgment of how fast or slow the ball may be hit and then react accordingly. In order to take full advantage of both sight and sound, an infielder must have a solid pre-pitch mentality and be focused on the hitting zone. Infielders must practice this during batting practice to get the full effect of using both sight and sound.

Developing a good RHYTHM WITH GROUND BALLS could be taught as a mechanic of fielding but has been separated from that section because of its overwhelming importance. Arriving in the proper position to field a ground ball requires a sense of timing. The terms "arriving on time" or "getting instinct with the ball" are good pictures of what actually needs to occur. There are three different hops which an infielder might field; long hop, short hop, and in-between hop. The most desirable hops to field are long hops or short hops with in-between hops being the hop most likely to be misfielded. Although sensory perception plays a large role in the rhythm phase, once the speed of the ground ball has been gauged, agility and timing must take over. This allows the infielder to get to and field the more desirable hops. An infielder accomplishes this by slowing down (shuffling his feet) or speeding up (taking a more direct approach to the ball); this process is referred to as "dancing with the ball." Once the fielder has arrived, with good timing, he will field and secure the ball.

Proper FIELDING MECHANICS must take place throughout the entire fielding process. This article will not cover the intricacies of fielding mechanics, but will list the major points of the fielding process.

1. Ready position
2. Check step
3. Getting outside of the ball
4. Right-left field (for a right-handed fielder)
5. Go down and get the ball, with the hands at 7 & 2 o'clock
6. Right-left throw (for a right-handed fielder)

The methods infielders use to approach and address the ball may be different. However, the infielder must have good feet and good hands or his fielding will be based on luck. Fielding mechanics are taught in many different ways, but a good infielder always finds a way to get into a good athletic position to field the ball.

The bottom line for any infielder is to get to the ball and MAKE THE PLAY. He must relax, feel confident, and explode. There is no time in a game to think back on the how to's of fielding. The infielder should react only to the situation and conquer it. This moment is the time all the hard work in practice pays off. All the thinking, repetition, and focus should take over and allow the infielder to accomplish only one thing, MAKING THE PLAY!

Every infielder must be successful on every ground ball hit to him on these five essentials. Baseball is a repetitious sport, and a good work ethic and practice regimen are the only ways to become truly proficient in these five areas. Every infielder must take pride in his craft. Becoming proficient in these five areas will allow him to further his mental and physical abilities.

Playing the Infield

The keys to becoming a good infielder are proper techniques and constant practice. All young ballplayers can become better fielders if they develop sound fundamentals and are willing to work hard toward self-improvement at every opportunity.

Resting Position (between pitches)

- relaxed comfortable stance with feet slightly more than shoulder width apart and hands placed on the knees
- upper body is leaning forward with knees relaxed and slightly bent
- weight evenly distributed on both feet

Ready Position

- hands drop from the knees and are held in front with the palms facing up
- weight on the balls of the feet with toes pointing slightly out
- sway from side to side or walk in

Fielding Position

- field the ball near the middle of the body
- feet should be more than shoulder width apart with the glove foot forward
- knees bent and extend hands out toward the ball with a bend in the elbows (glove always in view)
- place glove under the ball
- keep eyes on the ball until it is in the glove

Mechanics of Throwing

- finger pads across the wide seams
- line up shoulders and hips with target in good balance position
- swing throwing arm straight back
- point the ball away from target (fingers on top of the ball)
- throwing action should complete a circle
- move toward target on completion of throw

Fielding Ground Balls to the Right

- from the ready position, the infielder leans to the right and pivots on the toes of their right foot
- the left leg crosses over in front and takes a full stride to the right
- continue with the regular fielding position tips

Fielding Ground Balls to the Left

- from the ready position, the infielder leans to the left and pivots on the toes of their left foot
- the right leg crosses over in front and take a full stride to the left
- continue with the regular fielding position tips

Fielding Pop-Ups

- quickly determine the arc of the ball and run to the general area where it will land
- run on the balls of their feet
- whenever possible, the ball should be caught using both hands at about eye-level and over the infielder's throwing arm shoulder

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INFIELD

There are no rules as to which infielder must catch a ball hit in a certain area, only logical and physical limitations apply. So, let's try to make some sense of why a particular fielder fields balls hit into certain areas. To explain up front, when I say a player 'covers' an area, I'm saying that if a grounder, fly ball, or whatever, is hit in that general area, he should be the one to catch it. With that in mind...

The first and third basemen want to make sure no balls get hit between them and the baseline. Why? Because a ball hit 'down the line' usually leads to extra bases for the batter (like a double, triple, or even an inside the park homerun) because the outfielder has to cover more ground to get to it and the ball can bounce around kinda funny like in the outfield corners at some ballparks. They also have to cover some of the ground between them and the second baseman or shortstop, so they can't play too close to the foul line. They also cover any foul popups or bunts on their side.

As if that's not enough, since they are 'basemen' they must cover their base if there is the opportunity to force or tag out a runner. For the first baseman this happens a lot, like when a batter hits a ground ball to an infielder and that fielder throws the ball over to the first baseman who catches the ball while touching first base, forcing out the batter. For the third baseman it's not as common. If there is a runner on first and second base, then he has the opportunity to catch the ball and force out a runner at third. Also if a runner is trying to get to third on a ball hit to the outfield, the outfielder may throw the ball to the thirdbaseman who has to catch the ball and tag out the runner. Whew! Let's just move on...

The second baseman covers the area of the field from around the first baseman's area to around second base itself. The second baseman is also a baseman, so he has the responsibility of covering second base when a runner is attempting to steal or in force situations and stuff. He shares these duties with the shortstop. Why, and when, and how do they know, you ask? This is a good time for one of those little asides.

Right handed batters, those who bat from the right side of the plate (from the pitchers perspective), tend to hit the ball to left field, left handed batters to right field. Infielders and outfielders will position themselves accordingly. For example, if a left handed batter is up, the first baseman and second baseman may play a little deeper (toward the outfield) and little closer to the first baseline. The shortstop and third baseman will do the same for righthanded batters. We won't analyze it any further than that. Just know that this is the way it is so that you will understand the next point.

If a right handed batter is up, the second baseman usually covers second base. When a left handed batter is up, the shortstop gets the call. Think about the above paragraph and it makes sense. When a left handed batter is up the second baseman is playing a little further away from second base and the ball is more likely to be hit in his direction. Therefore, it makes sense for the shortstop to cover the bag.

The shortstop also has his own area of the field to cover, from around the third baseman's area to second base. A good shortstop is a very valuable asset to a team. He needs to be able to cover a lot of ground, make long throws to first, and be good at relaying throws from the outfielders to home plate, for instance. I'll save the discussion of 'relay' throws for when we are talking about the outfielders.

Playing the Outfield

Part of each practice session should be spent developing outfield skills. The techniques required to perform these skills are similar to that of infielding.

Stance: Most outfielders' resting position is a standing position with the feet spread approximately shoulder-width. The outfielder

assumes this position between pitches. As the pitcher releases the ball, the body begins to lower into a crouch position. Body weight and balance is forward on the balls of the feet. In the final 'ready position' the toes are turned slightly out and the hands are off the knees. This allows the outfielder to react in any direction.

Fly Balls: Outfielders should try and catch fly balls at eye level with two hands. The elbows are bent and the hands draw back slightly as the ball enters the glove. Having the throwing hand close to the glove allows the outfielder more time to find the correct grip (across seams). If possible, all fly balls should be caught facing the ball and over the throwing shoulder. This allows the outfielder to make a quicker and stronger throw.

Line Drives: The outfielder should approach low line drives with the glove fingers pointed down. Again, the player should concentrate on the ball and use two hands whenever possible. When going to the left or right, the outfielder must use the cross-over step by pivoting on the foot nearest the direction of the ball and crossing over with the other foot.

Ground Balls: All outfielders should charge ground balls. The mechanics of fielding the ball are identical to those for infielders. With runners on base, the outfielder charges the ball, but brings their body under control by slowing down and gliding into the correct fielding position. With no runners on base, an outfielder should be more conservative. Again, they charge the ball, but drop to one knee to receive the ball. With fly balls, the outfielder uses two hands and their eyes follow the ball into the glove.

Throwing: Outfielders should always use the overhand delivery when throwing and grip the ball across the seams. Here are the steps required to develop a proper overhand throw:

- 1) After catching ball, weight is shifted to the pivot leg (same side as throwing arm)
- 2) Arm drops down – front shoulder and hips point at target
- 3) Arm extends back for full extension
- 4) Body moves forward against firm front leg. Elbow is up
- 5) Ball is released in front of and above head with a downward snap of wrist
- 6) Follow-through with arm swinging down and across body

OUTFIELD

As you saw from the positions chart, all of the outfielders have quite a bit of ground to cover. The left fielder covers everything from the extended third base line to left-center field, the right fielder everything from the extended first base line to right center field, and the center fielder covers, well, centerfield. Covering all of this ground only looks easy if you're watching, say, Willie Mays or Ken Griffey, Jr. Otherwise, it takes as much effort as it looks like.

The play you see these guys making most often is catching the 'routine' fly ball. Granted, if they couldn't make that play, you certainly wouldn't be watching them at the major league level. But, at the next Little League game you watch, well, you'll see how difficult the 'routine' play can be. Next comes the ground ball that made it through the infield. Pretty easy unless you gotta come up firing at home plate to stop the guy that's trying to score. A little harder is those line drives, especially the ones hit in the gap. Those diving catches sure look good don't they? They are. If the outfielder misses that catch the ball goes on to the fence and the batter is headed for extra bases. We all know how bad that is.

The great plays these guys make are easy to see. The diving catches, the leaping grabs to save a homerun at the fence. Instead of emphasising these, let's talk about what the outfielders do that you have to know to look for. And keep this one point in mind, it is always the goal of the team at bat to move runners around the bases. To turn a single into a double, to hit a sacrifice fly to advance a runner, whatever it takes to move runners around to score, that is what the team at bat is trying to do.

The first priority of the outfielder is to keep the ball in front of him. To make sure that he stops the ball and throws it back in to the infield in time to stop the batter/runner from advancing an extra base (assuming of course that he doesn't catch the ball in the air). What base the runners are on, and how deep the ball is hit, is what makes the outfield plays more exciting. No runners on base, bloop hit to the outfield, the outfielder simply catches the ball, tosses it into second and next batter please. Only now, there's a runner on first, which changes everything. The outfielder wants to make sure that he catches any subsequent hits in time to stop that runner at second. So, if there is another bloop hit into the outfield he must now make the play a little quicker to make sure the runner doesn't make it to third, or in to score.

One of the finer points to look for in an outfielder is how well he throws. Not just how hard or far, but how accurate. When an outfielder is throwing the ball in to the infield, he is generally throwing to a 'cutoff' man. The cutoff man is an infielder who is in line between the outfielder and the base he is throwing to.

A 'little' aside here, to determine who the cutoff man is, which is not an easy thing to do, and add this to the infielders' responsibilities from the last lesson. Who is the cutoff man depends upon where the ball is hit, and if there are any runners on base. This of course, means a lengthy discussion for us. If a ball is hit to right field the second baseman is the cut off man. Meaning the throw in from the right fielder will come to him to be relayed to second, or third base. Usually if the throw is coming to home plate, the first baseman will become the cutoff man. If the ball is hit to left field, the shortstop will be the cutoff man on a throw to second or third, or maybe the third baseman on a throw to home. (The pitcher is supposed to back up the catcher on any throws to home, meaning if the catcher misses it, the pitcher is there to catch it and prevent any other runners from advancing.)

It's the cut-off man's responsibility to cut the throw (meaning catch it), or allow the throw to go on to the base it is headed. When they're properly aligned, the cutoff man will be in a straight line from the outfielder to the base where the ball is being thrown. If it's just a normal single, no runners on base, then the throw can hit the cutoff man or go straight to the base, doesn't really matter unless the runner is trying to stretch that single into a double. If so, the fielders better have their ducks in a row (no pun intended) to make sure that doesn't happen. If there is a runner trying to get the extra base, or score, then the relay throw is most important. Assuming the ball is hit too deep for the outfielder to throw all the way to homeplate, for example, then the outfielder needs to hit the cutoff man and then the cutoff man turns and throws to home to get the runner.

Ok, enough about cutoffs. If you don't get it, watch a game and look for it. It'll be there. Of course, you're likely to see an outfielder with a really good arm throwing from deep center all the way to home, without even thinking of the cutoff man. But, he'll be there just the same. You just might see the cutoff man 'cutting' the throw to home and throwing to second to catch the batter trying to stretch that single into a double. He might do this when it's more beneficial to get the out at second than at home plate.

So, what we've learned so far is that outfielders are supposed to keep the ball in front of them and hit the cutoff man (or not, depending...). The other thing I want to talk about here is range. An outfielder's range is how much ground he can cover. A very important thing considering how much 'field' there is out there in the outfield. For that matter, the same thing applies to the infielders. How well they can get to balls hit in the gap can determine their 'greatness'. For our outfielders, we know that they do not want hits to get past them. They can also 'rob' hits by catching balls that it doesn't seem they can get to, but do. That's why everyone cheers when they make those sliding or leaping catches. Just remember the trade off, if they miss, extra bases, if they catch it, batter's out.

In summary, watch what the outfielders and infielders do, where the throws go and who's there to catch them. Watch the outfielders making great catches while weighing the spectacular catch against the 'safe' play that keeps the runners from advancing. To understand both is to better understand baseball...

Defensive Strategies

First-base defense. The basic positioning of a first baseman depends on the batter, on the inning, and on how many outs there are. The standard position is five steps back toward the right-field wall on a diamond with 60-foot bases. (For regulation diamonds with 90-foot base paths, seven steps off the line and seven steps back is standard.) The first baseman should try for as much depth as possible without giving up the chance to field a routine ground ball and beat the runner in a race to first - yet still be able to cover a bunt.

Double-play depth depends on whether the batter bats right- or left-handed. For a right-handed hitter, the first baseman should hold the runner close, then drop back. For a lefty he should stay closer, then, when the pitch is released, shuffle off the bag.

With runners on first and second, play in front of the runner and the bag, but keep an eye on the runner so he doesn't get too big a lead. With good hitters or with those who hit to the right side of the infield, play behind the runner, then jab-step toward the bag to hold the runner. In the late innings in a close game, play closer to first base to guard against doubles hit down the right-field line.

Second-base defense. For second basemen, the standard positioning on a diamond of 60 foot bases is six steps toward first base and six steps toward right field. (On a regulation diamond, nine steps toward first and nine steps back.)

In double-play situations, the middle infielders should "pinch" the middle of the infield, with the second baseman moving to a spot four steps toward first and four steps back. When left-handed hitters are up, play seven steps back and seven steps toward first. In bunt situations, play closer to first base.

Shortstop Defense. The standard position for shortstop play on 60-foot diamonds is six steps toward third base and six steps toward left field (nine steps plus nine steps on regulation diamonds), because most action is up the "spine" of the infield. Young players often play too close to third base or "in the hole."

In double-play situations or to cover a steal, the shortstop should take the risk of pinching the middle and letting any ball hit in the hole go; he should be between four and seven steps (on a regulation diamond) away from the bag toward third and the same number of steps back.

Third base defense. Six steps toward second base and two steps toward left field is the standard position for a third baseman. In the late innings or in close games, the third baseman should guard against doubles down the line.

Third basemen shouldn't try to hold runners at third. If a runner takes too big a lead, the catcher should call a pitchout and throw to third.

General Defense. Eighty percent of the time, standard bunt defense calls for the first and third basemen, along with the pitcher, to charge the ball, while the second baseman covers first. In the "wheel" defense with runners at first and second, the same players charge the ball, but the shortstop - after he "drives" the runner on second back to the bag with an aggressive jab step - then races to cover third. The second baseman covers second. The ball is thrown to third unless the fielder is certain the runner will be safe.

With runners on first and third, there are three basic defensive strategies: First, the catcher can try to throw out the runner heading for second base. Second, the shortstop or second baseman can cut off a throw to second in front of the bag and relay it to the catcher to put out a runner trying to steal home. Finally, the catcher can throw to third to attempt to pick off the runner.

When the bases are loaded or runners are at first and third with less than two outs, infielders should be placed in a "split" position, with the first and third basemen playing in and the middle infielders at double-play depth.

Other situations that should be practiced include do-or-die plays, holding runners on base, picking off runners, rundowns, balks, a "wheel" with a pickoff, first and third defense, outfield positioning, and relays.

1. On every batted ball, each fielder moves to the ball, a base, or a backup position.
2. Throw every ball with a purpose to a target.
3. Outfielders are in the base-take-away business. From the outfield, always throw the ball one base ahead of the runner. Never throw behind a runner. After fielding balls hit deep, throw the ball to the relay man.
4. An outfielder must make every effort to keep a ball that is hit to him from bouncing past him. Get in front of the ball and use your body to block it from skipping by.
5. Whenever there is a runner on base, the shortstop backs up every return throw from the catcher to the pitcher.
6. On any ball hit between fielders, the fielder in the best position must call for the ball. Don't catch it unless you call, and don't call unless you can catch it! The fielder that is called off the ball moves immediately to a backup position.
7. On every outfield throw to a relay or cutoff man, the throw should be low, hard, and shoulder high on the fielder.
8. After the pitcher releases the pitch, he becomes an infielder. He must be ready to move to the ball, a base, or a backup position on every batted ball.
9. On any ball hit to the first base side, the pitcher must run toward first and be ready to cover the base.
10. On any throw from the outfield to third base or home base, the pitcher must be in position to back up the play.
11. In a bunt situation, make sure you take at least one of the other team's outs away.
12. Prevent the big inning! Every hitter is a dangerous hitter.

The following quotations can be heard in every baseball park at any time.

These are at the heart of baseball philosophy.

1. Prevent the big inning.
2. "If you hold them scoreless, I promise you a tie"
said the offensive coach to the defensive coach!
3. We cannot lose if we do not let them score.
4. In 65% of games, more runs are scored by the winning team in one inning than the losing team scores in the entire game.
5. Pitching is 75% of the game.
6. Pitching is 80% of the game.
7. Pitching is 90% of the game.
8. "Who is the toughest hitter you ever faced?" Anyone with a bat!

9. The pitcher is the fifth infielder and protects the center of the diamond
10. The pitcher, when he completes his pitch to home plate, is only 54 feet from the hitter. He better have his glove ready.
11. You must be good defensively up the middle.
12. All championship teams have a great defensive catcher.
13. More errors are made by third basemen than any other position.
14. The first baseman makes the rest of the infielders look good.
15. That outfield can really go get them.
16. Every one on every play is in the right position.
17. They never beat themselves.
18. Their pre-game infield practice is really impressive.
19. They really play with a great deal of pride.
20. Did you see that team hustle on and off the field?
21. Keep the runner off first base.
22. Keep the runner off third base.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RUNNERS AT THIRD BASE

To elaborate on the last quotation, it is one of the fundamental ideas in baseball philosophy. The importance of runners on third base is often overlooked by coaches. Some runners cause havoc when they reach third; they dance off the base, threaten to steal or to pull a suicide squeeze, and generally cause the opponent to lose hair and sleep. However, every runner on third base is far more likely to score than a runner on second base. **Keeping runners off third base must be an important key to the team's defensive philosophy**, (and a fundamental part of the team's offensive philosophy should be to get runners to third base). **To illustrate the importance of keeping runners off third, here is a list of 24 ways in which a runner can score from third base but not from second base.**

A runner can score from third base but not second base on...

1. A balk.
2. A catcher's interference.
3. A wild pitch.
4. A passed ball.
5. A hard hit ground ball through the infield and directly in front of an outfielder.
6. An error by an infielder which eludes him by more than ten feet.
7. A short pop-up just beyond the infield that is dropped by a fielder.

8. A short line drive or a bloop single just over the infield.
9. A sacrifice fly.
10. A fly ball dropped by an outfielder.
11. A fair pop-up dropped by an infielder with two outs.
12. A walk or a hit batter with the bases full.
13. On a wild throw by the catcher back to the pitcher.
14. A ground ball, early in the game with runners on first and third, no outs, and the defense decides to go for the double play. *(Note: So you think this play is inconsequential? This play occurred in the third inning of a scoreless game during the 1959 World Series, allowing the Chicago White Sox to score the first run of the game against Sandy Koufax and the Los Angeles Dodgers. The White Sox won the game by the score of 1 to 0.)*
15. A wild throw by the pitcher attempting to pick the runner off third base.
16. A wild throw by the pitcher attempting to pick a runner off first base.
17. A wild throw by the catcher attempting to pick the runner off third base.
18. A wild throw by the catcher attempting to throw out a runner trying to steal second base.
19. A dropped throw from the catcher on an attempted steal of second base.
20. With runners on first and third, less than two outs, the runner on first heads for second base; the catcher throws to the cutoff man who makes a wild throw back to the catcher.
21. A suicide squeeze bunt.
22. A steal of home.
23. A wild throw by an infielder attempting to throw the batter out at first base.
24. An interference by an infielder during a rundown play on the runner at third. *(Note: Although the runner may be heading back toward third base when interference occurs, he is nevertheless permitted to score because an obstructed runner is awarded at least one base beyond the base he last legally touched.)*

TEN KEYS TO FOUR RUNS OR LESS!

1. Keep the double-play in order.
2. Outfielders must hit the cutoff man.
3. Avoid the "big inning"---allow opponents only three outs per inning.
4. Minimize walks by challenging hitters.
5. Have a coach call the pitches as well as all the pick-off plays.
6. Utilize hitting charts and scout the opponents.
7. Position fielders according to the score, number of outs, count, hitter's strength and inning.
8. Shut down the running game--force opponents to play station-to-station.
9. Get the leadoff hitter out of every inning.
10. Pitching, pitching, pitching--a quality pitching staff is the key element in achieving four-runs-or-less on a consistent basis.

TEN SITUATIONS THAT AFFECT FOUR-RUNS-OR-LESS!

I. Batter at the plate.

- A.** The hitter is always the number one priority.
- B.** The pitcher works extremely hard to retire the leadoff hitter every inning.
This is the backbone of four-runs-or less!
Pitchers are to be aggressive, challenging the batter (especially with fastballs in a 2-2 count or BP fastballs when behind in the count), making him swing the bat.
- C.** Prevent the bunt for a hit (drag bunt).

II. Runner at first base.

- A.** Prevent the stolen base.
 - 1. Pitchers must be quick to the plate - *1.3 seconds or less*
 - 2. Vary times to the plate and to home
Pause one-to-five seconds before delivering the ball to the plate or throwing over to hold the runner close
 - 3. Use a variety of pick-off moves
 - a. Step back off the rubber with ball over head--no throw
 - b. Throw to first base. Use a variety of pick-off moves
 - (1) Throw from set position
 - (2) Throw on the way down
 - (3) Throw on the way up
 - c. Hold the runner until the batter calls time-out
Don't deliver the ball to the plate. Freeze the runner and see if he is getting anxious
 - 4. Do not be afraid to call pitchouts
 - 5. Middle infielders pinch between pitches to eliminate delay steal
- B.** Catcher must block balls in the dirt and keep the runner from advancing on a wild pitch or passed ball.
- C.** In a bunt situation, get an out.

III. Runner at Second - No Outs

- A.** Prevent third base, one out
 - 1. Try to entice the batter to hit the ball on the left side of the infield
 - a. Fastballs inside to a right-handed batter pose a difficult challenge for them to hit to the right side
 - b. Slow curve balls and changeups are also difficult for right-handed batters to stay back and hit to the right side
 - c. Dominate outer half of strike zone to a lefty in this situation with two-seam fastballs
 - d. Showcase off-speed pitches off the plate to set up outside fastballs to left-handed batters

IV. Third Base - One Out

- A.** Pitchers work hard for a strikeout
- B.** Throw up and in, especially with two strikes on the batter to induce a pop-up in the infield
- C.** Bring the infield in, especially with two strikes on the batter
- D.** Catchers must keep the ball in the dirt in front of them
- E.** Be wary of throwing off-speed pitches over the plate -
Changeups and Curve balls!
This will usually lead to a fly ball to the outfield!

V. Runners at the Corners with Two Outs

- A.** Prevent the lead runner from scoring on a double steal attempt.

1. Throw through 90% of the time on a first and third steal attempt with the SS covering second and 2B coming into the cut to shorten the overthrow

B. If the runner at first leaves early:

1. Pitcher should step off.
2. Look runner back at third.
3. Give ball up to SS or 2B.
4. First baseman trails runner after pitch crosses the plate.
5. Get the out between first and second before the runner crosses the plate.

VI. Runners at First and Second with Less Than Two Outs

- A.** Get an out in a bunt situation.
- B.** Pitchers throw low strikes to either side of the plate to induce a double-play ground ball.
- C.** Prevent the double steal.
 1. Pitchers use inside move at second.
 2. Use trail runner picks (pick at first base).
 3. Catcher keeps ball in front.

VII. Bases Loaded - Less Than Two Outs

- A.** Pitcher induces batter to hit the ball on the ground by throwing low strikes.
- B.** Be careful with changeups in this situation as it tends to end up as a long fly ball.
- C.** Do not be afraid to challenge hitters with fastballs on the inner half to prevent them from getting their arms extended.

VIII. On-Deck Batter

- A.** The coach should know the strengths of the batter at the plate as well as the next batter coming to the plate
- B.** Pitch the batter tough with a runner in scoring position and first base open
- C.** Know which batter poses more of a threat, the batter at the plate or the man on deck
- D.** Consider challenging the batter at the plate when there is a strong hitter on deck
A hitter with whom the pitcher will have trouble!

IX. Runner at Third - No Outs

- A.** Concede the run early in the game and get the hitter
- B.** If the hitter makes an out without advancing the runner at third, the defense has created a 3rd-base, 1 out situation

X. Runners at Second and Third - Less Than Two Outs

- A.** Concede the run at third base
- B.** Depending on who is at the plate and on deck, go for the strikeout
- C.** Infielders keep the ground ball in the infield
- D.** On a base hit, the outfielder must hit the cutoff man to prevent additional runners from moving up
Do not be concerned with throwing the runner out at the plate