

Fielding Drills

Grounders

Position players in two lines: one line at midpoint between 1B and 2B and one line between 2B and 3B. Two coaches hit balls from opposite sides of home plate. One player shags balls for each coach. Hit three balls to first fielder who throws to shagger. After third grounder, fielder moves to shagger (running around other coach/hitter) and shagger moves to the end of the opposite fielding line. Mix in line drives and pop ups as drill progresses.

Alligator Hand Drill

You can use the same set up as above or simply divide players into two or three groups and place in field as in above drill. Coach either hits or throws ground balls to players and instructs the players they must do three things for each ground ball:

1. Players must field the ball using a wide, athletic stance, and “sit down” toward the ball instead of simply bending from the waist.
2. Glove must be “down and dirty.” In other words, the player’s glove must start on the ground as the “sit down” and get in position to field the ball.
3. Immediately after ball enters the glove pocket, player **MUST** trap ball into glove or drill has been done incorrectly. The “alligator hand” is the description used by coach to describe action of the top hand closing on top of ball in glove.

Bare Hand/Soft hand Drill

Same drill as above only players do not use a glove and ball is not thrown or hit as hard. This drill is particularly effective if players simply refuse to get top hand to close over ball and trap ball in glove pocket. Ball must be hit or thrown firmly, but not extremely hard. Bare hands or soft hands can be used for this drill

We recommend the 8U coaches begin with Bare Hands drill when teaching proper method for fielding ground balls. Also, they can also begin with the use of lite flites if necessary. Move from Bare Hands to Alligator Hands to Ground Ball drill. This is an essential skill all 8U’s should be able to execute before moving to 10U’s. The 10U coaches should ensure that this skill is second nature before the girls move to 12U. The 10U coaches should also work hard on ground ball footwork discussed below so that by the time the players are 12U, the 12U coaches can fine tune the footwork for ground balls and fly balls.

Fly Balls

Divide players into even lines, 2 or 3 depending on number of coaches available. Have first player in line stand 15 – 20 ft away from coach. Drill is done in two parts:

1. The first 4-5 times through the line, the player turns shoulder, and then runs a short banana route. As player begins to complete turn toward coach the coach throws fly ball to player. Player completes turn and route and runs under fly ball to make catch. Complete 4-5 on each side.

2. The next 4-5 times through the line player is required to run the same route only in this case the coach throws the ball before player begins route. Player must run route and adjust to where coach throws ball (coaches should try to be consistent at first!). Players should complete 4-5 each shoulder. Players first move should be to take one step back and turn shoulder to the proper side. Drills A and B should be completed exactly the same way for ground balls.

Complete the same drill for fly balls hit directly overhead. In this case, the player should turn shoulder to either side, outrun the ball and then catch the ball moving forward.

For 8U or 10U players that are at the beginning stages of catching fly balls we suggest the following:

1. Using lite flite balls, have the player stand 15-20 ft from the coach. Have the coach toss the ball into the air, but not too high, toward player. Have player, without glove, catch ball, above head, with both hands. Repeat lots until player is comfortable catching a fly ball.
2. Repeat above drill, only this time add glove. Begin by explaining purpose of pocket of glove. Explain that is where you want them to catch the ball. Have coach toss ball in same manner to player. Have player camp under ball and try to site ball over top of glove. Have player look ball into pocket of glove. Once ball is in glove, use throwing hand to trap into glove. After player is somewhat comfortable catching lite flites, change to regular softballs.

The goal for new players and those with no confidence in catching fly balls is to just get used to catching the ball. Footwork is NOT the issue at this point! After they are comfortable catching the ball, then add in the foot work drill (speaking here of mostly 10U players and more advanced 8U's)

Additional points of emphasis for teaching the skill is that generally speaking the first step by an outfielder in catching a fly ball is one step backward and that outfielders should attempt to time the catch of the ball such that they are moving forward, toward the infield when they make the catch. They can then use their momentum to help add speed and power to their throw.

Lateral Movement #1

Position 6 to 8 tossers (with a ball each) in a row with each tosser 10 to 15 feet apart. Position a receiver up to 50 feet in front of tosser 1; tosser 1 throws a grounder to receiver who throws the ball back to tosser 1 and gets back into defensive position. Tossers 2 through 8 throw a ground ball to the receiver's right who moves laterally to field the ball and throws back to tosser 2. After last tosser, receiver reverses direction and then takes the last tosser's position. Tossers 1 through 8 become the receiver. Vary by throwing line drives and soft flies.

Lateral Pick Up

Players pair up with each standing about 6 to 10 feet apart. Tossers roll ball about 5 to 6 feet to the right of the fielder who moves laterally to field the ball and throw it underhand back to the tosser. Tossers then roll the ball 5 to 6 feet to the fielder's left and continues in this

manner for 5 to 10 repetitions before players exchange positions. Be sure fielder follows underhand toss before getting back into fielding position. **Coaches, receiver must be “sitting” to field ball rather than simply bending from waist or this drill teaches poor fielding mechanics.**

Fungo Hitting/ Fielding

Position one player 60 feet in front of player/hitter; position shagger to the right of the hitter (or left, if left-handed hitter). Form as many groups of three as desired; have some groups hitting grounders in the infield and others hitting flies in the outfield. Have hitter hit 10 grounders or 10 flies to the fielder, then rotate -- fielder becomes shagger, shagger becomes hitter, hitter becomes fielder. **Emphasis need to be kept on the proper footwork to ground balls and fly balls.**

Charging Drill

Players form lines of 3 or more facing a tosser who is 50 to 70 feet away. Tossers throw a grounder so the player must charge to the midpoint to field the ball before throwing it to the tosser and going to the end of the line. Outfielders can be positioned 90 feet from tosser and perform the drill in the same manner. Players focus should be looking the ball into their glove as well as fielding the ball on the side opposite your throwing hand and come up throwing to the correct base or cutoff person.

Fly Ball Pass #1

Players pair up standing side by side. The receiver runs out about 15 feet and the tosser leads her with a fly ball so that she has to catch the ball over her left shoulder. After quickly getting set and throwing the ball back to the tosser, the receiver runs back to the starting position. Continue with 4 more throws that increase the distance by 15 feet each time. Switch positions. Then switch again to perform the drill with throws over the receiver's right shoulder. **Coaches make sure players run a proper route to the fly ball.** Emphasis should be placed on the banana route more than the over the shoulder path to the ball. The banana routes so players are in the best position possible to make a throw and keep a runner from advancing. This is especially critical for infielders tracking down a fly ball behind first and third or in foul territory.

Double Relay

Put 3 players in a line, evenly spaced, 50 feet apart. Player on one end turns her back to the others, rolls her ball out in front, runs it down, and turns to throw to the player in the middle who relays the throw (turning to the glove side) to the player on the other end. Player receiving the ball turns her back and repeats the drill. After 6 throws, the player in the middle rotates with a player on an end. Drill continues until each player has been in the middle a specified number of times

Fence Drill (14U and up)

Drill has as many tossers as the side fence or wall area allows. Players form up in groups of two or more. Player stands 20 feet from the fence or wall and the tosser throws a pop up close to the fence/wall. Player locates fence/wall using outstretched arm, then comes back

to catch the ball. Players rotate after 5 catches each. Be sure players switch directions so they have to find the fence from both the glove hand side and throwing hand side.

Infielder/ Outfielder Jurisdictions

Put fielders in defensive positions and have two tossers throw fly balls and pop ups between them. Fielder going back should normally go for the ball until called off by a fielder coming in. Fielder going back should only call for the ball when she is certain of the catch. On balls hit between the outfielders, the centerfielder is in charge. On balls hit between the shortstop and second baseman, the shortstop is in charge. Pitcher yields to all infielders. **Coaches, add in soft ground balls and pop ups hit between: a) pitcher, first base and second base; b) pitcher, third base and shortstop.**

Clockwork or Line Drill

Place a player as a cutoff-approx. 50 ft. from the catcher and 5 or 6 outfielders-each spread out from right to left, approx. 50 ft. from cutoff. Coach will hit a ball to the player farthest left, the player throws to cutoff, and cutoff throws home. After throwing to cut off the fielder then runs to take cutoff spot, the cut off after throwing home, runs home to become catcher, and the catcher is to run to the open spot in the outfield. In a short amount of time fielders get to field in all outfield positions, work on throws, and get some conditioning. **Coaches, you need to monitor this drill to be sure that the players do not get sloppy with catches, throws, turns, and relays. Coaches must insist on good execution of technique.**

Cones

Set out some small cones in an arc in the outfield and then hit grounders to the outfielders. They must round the cones before reaching the ball. This teaches them to go to the path of the ball and not directly at the ball. **Coaches, make sure the cones are set in the “banana route” to the ball.**

Football Fly’s

Have players practice catching running fly balls over the shoulder using soft footballs. They run out like a football receiver from the coach. The coach throws the football and they have to catch it over their right shoulder or left shoulder using both hands up and bringing in the ball. They cannot turn around and back up. This helps with hand-eye coordination also. After several successful catches have the players put their gloves on and then they catch the football with the glove on always using both hands. After more successful catches move to the softball. This drill is fun and has really improved out fly ball catches. **Coaches, this drill should be used in conjunction with the proper teaching of the “banana route” to the ball and not run straight line to the ball like a wide receiver.**

Outfield Fly

Place half the team in left field and the rest in center. The coach hit a fly ball in between the first two outfielders. Both center field and left fielders go for the ball with one catching it and the other properly backing up the fielder. If the ball happens to get by both fielders then they will use a relay throw to get the ball back to the coach. This drill helps players in backing up on all balls, and easy to do before games.