

Player Pitch Coaching Clinic



Baseball Positive 2023

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There is good information in this guide. It is not meant to be consumed all at once. It is a Guide; a reference to use throughout the season. Few teams/coaches will cover all this material in a season. My hope is this helps make for a fun and fulfilling year for you, your staff, the players and parents. The result being you decide to coach again next year ...when you will pick up this guide again.

Just like players, coaches get better with more repetitions. Have fun, and enjoy the experience through the eyes of the kids. 'Success' is experiencing the many 'little victories' along the way, when a player or the team, makes those small but noticeable jumps in their development and understanding.

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FOUNDATIONS

Bat Safety

Carry the bat by the barrel ([p.5](#))

Coaching Kids

- REPS, REPS, REPS brief instruction; get them moving coach/review details later
- Lack of Body Strength reason for many technical mistakes
...parents ask for tips to get better: Sleep & Vegetables → get stronger
- The 60' game is different from the 90' game
- It's not what **WE** know; it's what **THEY** understand

[Parent Helpers](#) (blog)

Traffic cops (Coaches can focus on Coaching)

- Get kids **organized** for each drill
- Get kids **in and out** of drill reps
- Help with **transitions** between activities
- **Shag** balls (in the outfield during [Batting Practice - 12 Player Drill](#))
- Collect **overthrows** (during [Playing Catch Practice](#)) and give players another ball, so they keep working
- Help with **individual player issues** (ex: get them a band-aid)

The Base

- Base is for the Runner; Ball is for the Defense
- Positioning to receive a throw
 - A. Ready Position
 - B. *Next to* the base
 - 1) Side of the base the ball is coming from - deep concept for younger players; prioritize other points
 - 2) Body squared to the ball, facing the ball (Ready Position)
 - 3) *Not touching* the base
- Ball First, Base Second ([p.9](#))
...Third Baseman moved off the base to catch the off-line throw. The runner was safe this time; it happens a lot.
Catching (stopping) the **ball is priority #1**.

Drill: [Receiving a Throw at a Base](#)

...Important! ...do this in your 3rd or 4th practice ...maybe sooner. A component of many other drills)

Bat Safety - Carry the Bat by the Barrel

The only time a batter holds a bat by the handle is at home plate in a game/scrimmage, or after getting their feet in position to swing during a drill, under the supervision of a coach.

Each year thousands of kids are seriously injured when a teammate is swinging a bat randomly on the field, unaware of other kids walking near by.

It is challenging to train kids to not hold the bat by the handle when they are walking around. For many, the handle is the only part of the bat where they have placed their hands.

Step 1 in training our kids, is to alert them that the pros, when walking around, carry the bat by the barrel. Show them how to Look Cool Like The Pros. Second, and finally, look at a bat as a loaded gun when a kid is holding it by the handle. It can cause just as much damage. Respond and correct them with the same urgency as if it were a gun. That can save a child, on the receiving end of a misplaced swing, from having their life permanently changed, or worse.



RECEIVING THROWS & THROWING

Receiving Throws

('Open Gloves')

1. Ready Position ([picture p.8](#))
2. Move Feet to Catch ([picture p.9](#))
3. Reach Forward to Catch ([picture p.9](#))

- Receiving a Throw at a Base **DRILL** - '[Cover the Base With Your Eyes](#)' VIDEO of the **DRILL** ([watch](#): 0:46 - 2:05)
(Coach should deliver the ball to player using an Underhand Toss. In the video, the ball is delivered overhand.)

Underhand Toss - ([picture p.10](#))

- Arm action; level toss
- Feet Throw the ball; arm *guides* the ball
- Follow your head
- ♦ [Video #1](#) - teaching to kids (video length: 0:57)
- ♦ [Video #2](#) - Pro player during practice (Watch 1:38 - 2:05)
- ♦ [Video #3](#) - Pro player during a game (Watch 0:00 - 0:10)

[DRILL Diagram](#) (probably only run this drill for a couple days to get the kids a ton of reps, and a feel for the action.
Many other drills involve the Underhand Toss. They'll get plenty of reps, using the Underhand Toss, in those drills.)

Throwing - 'No Ball' Drills

Power Position ([picture p.7 top](#))

- Turn & Pull - **anchor** glove elbow ([picture p.7 bottom](#))
(We progress to **Drive** & Pull after a couple of days)
- **Wrist** Action (Snapping the throwing wrist down)
- Shuffle
- Shuffle, Shuffle, Pull, Snap ...follow your head

***Once the players grasp the concept of moving their feet to throw, we begin using the teaching phrase, **"Feet & Wrist"** as a reminder, constantly, anytime they are involved in activities involving an Overhand Throw.

READY POSITION



Ball First, Base Second

Move Feet to Catch

Reach Forward to Catch

This throw was offline. The third baseman left the base - moved feet to 'get the ball first'.

We want to teach our kids that they can't get an out on every play; the runners are safe A Lot.



UNDERHAND TOSS

In each picture we can clearly see that these players are running towards their target, "Move Your Feet to Throw", powering their throws with their legs. The use of the arm is primarily to 'guide the ball'. The arm action in the pic of the kids is not ideal, though the player is obviously running. The act of really extending the arm takes more strength than we, as adults, might realize. With repetitions the kids' technique in the release aspect of the action will improve quite a bit.



Throwing Action - Pull Glove Elbow



FIELDING

FIELDING

Fielding a Ground Ball

1. FAST - run fast to the ball
2. SLOW - slow down to catch the ball*
3. FAST - move feet fast to throw the ball

* Feet Wide to Catch ([p.14-15](#))

Fielding Drills Have Two Parts ...each is equally important (1) The CatchAND (2) The Throw

Establish an expectation that every throw made on field during practice uses the fundamentals taught (Move Feet to Throw, Head straight, wrist snap, momentum after the throw (follow your head).

We want to maximize skill building opportunities. Kids have limited time during practices to get skill building reps. We want to take advantage of every opportunity for them to practice throwing correctly.

Major League Shortstops - Fielding Footwork ([VIDEO](#))

The **first 1:30** is a Series of short clips (1-2 seconds each), **at regular speed**, illustrating the **'Fast-Slow-Fast'** footwork **rhythm** of the ground ball fielding action.

- **First Clip** - watch for 'Move Feet to Throw' resulting in the player 'Gaining Ground' towards their target.
- **Second Clip** - watch the player get their 'Feet Wide to Catch'. They 'Step in Front of the Ball **to Field the Ball**'
- **0:18-0:24** - Four clips in a row where the 'Fast-Slow-Fast' **Rhythm of the Feet** is quite clear to see.
 - A. **Fast** - note the *quick choppy steps* preparing to catch the ball
 - B. **Slow** - players actions throttle down to make the 'Wide Feet to Catch' action ...under control
 - C. **Fast** - player 'shuffling' feet towards the target, generating power for the throw

The second half of the video (**1:30 - 3:20**) shows the fielding action is **slow motion**.

Not only can we clearly see the **'Fast-Slow-Fast'** footwork **rhythm**, the throwing action is much easier to see.

Feet Wide to Catch



Ground Balls - “Feet Wide to Catch”



Strong, grown-up body: teen, college, pro

Kid body:
smaller muscles;
less body strength



Fly Balls

Quality repetitions is priority number one for fly ball work. This involves us tossing fly balls, not trying to hit them with a bat. The two habits we want to establish in the kids

Run full speed while going for a fly ball

Extend the glove away from the body to catch the ball

Toss drills are not a cure-all for helping kids judge fly balls. We have to be honest with ourselves regarding how much time we have and making the best use of that time. Toss drills are the most efficient approach.

- [Drop Step](#)
- [Toss Drills](#)
- [Perpendicular Toss](#)
- [Fly Balls - 3 Toss Drill](#)

OF Fielding Ground Balls

- [Box Drill](#) (Fast, Slow, Fast)

Recovering The Ball - 'Pick up Both Sides of the Ball' (*all positions; anywhere on the field*)

- Center the ball between the feet
- Glove side of the body facing target
- Throwing hand picks up one side of the ball
- Glove hand picks up the other side of the ball



MLB catcher, Miguel Montero demonstrating the rule, 'Pick up Both Sides of the Ball' during a clinic .

DRILLS

DRILLS

- Repetition is paramount. Instruction has its place, but not as important as Reps.
- Compact your drill space ([Mini Diamond](#) - Super Tool)
- It's not going to workthe first time ...or the second ...but they soon start to Get It

Most are:

- Catch —> Throw —> Catch
- Putting different Foundational pieces together
- Same stuff, different spot on field

Fielding Drills (50/50)

- Two parts that are Equally important: 1) Field/Catch 2) Throw

Delivering Balls in Drills (see videos on next page)

Ground Balls

- Medium-Slow (Footwork and Rhythm are focus)
- Don't roll straight to player

Fly Balls —> **UH Toss by Coach**

- Not judging the ball
- 'Run & Catch' drills
- Toss Underhand
- Low arc

Delivering Balls in Drills

In the process skill development of baseball/softball players, **one of the most important concepts** for a youth coach to understand:

Consistently delivering balls in drills, to the right/same spot and at the right pace (med-slow), is an absolute must

Consistently batting a ball where and how a coach intends, rarely happens. This inconsistency keeps us from developing a good rhythm and flow in drill work. Developing skills and muscle memory requires **massive and consistent repetition** throughout each drill session. ...this is why **professional coaches** run many drills by rolling, tossing and throwing balls instead of using a bat.

Below are several videos illustrating this concept.

[Orioles DP Feeds](#) - watch: 3:42 - 4:37

[Trey Mancini 1b Drills](#) - watch: 1:35 - 2:10

[Yankees - DP Turn](#) - using a machine (same concept: Accurate delivery, Quick pace, Massive Reps) - Watch: 0:15-0:35

[Cardinals OF - low liners](#) - Watch: 0:00 – 0:20

[Rangers](#) - Watch: 1:00-1:07 (can't see coach; based on pace of ball and accuracy, can tell its being rolled)

2:58-3:11 - tossing fly balls

3:45-4:00 - batting off a knee from pitchers mound (same concept: Compact Space, Accuracy and Reps)

[Twins - Sano footwork for OF](#) - Watch: 3:50-4:15; 4:55-5:10

[Fielding Clinic](#) Watch:

2:25 – 2:40

3:50 – 4:10

4:55 – 5:05

5:25 – 5:40

7:10 – 7:25

[Cal Ripken Jr. - Move Feet, Follow Your Head](#): Watch 3:47- 5:21

(this doesn't involve the ball being delivered to the fielder; does address Moving Feet)

Don't deliver the ball straight to a fielder

Our primary objective is to make our kids conscious of the important role their feet play in fielding a ground ball. Delivering ground balls straight to a player conflicts with achieving this objective. We want balls delivered to our kids, 8-12 feet to the side, at a relatively slow pace, so they can angle in to the ball in their approach. Players develop timing, rhythm and a sense for angles. There are few circumstances that call for delivering a ball directly to a player in a drill.

DRILLS

Fundamental Drills (we want to constantly run these drills all season long ...in parenthesis: suggested times to run the drill)

- [20' Ground Balls](#) (Skill Building Warm-up)
 - **40' Ground Balls** (Team Drills) - same concept as 20' Ground Balls. Difference is kids are throwing overhand. We stand 40'-60' away from the players when delivering the ball (throwing the ball, not hitting with a bat | distance of the drill varies by age)
 - [Ground Balls Throwing Across](#) (Team Drills)
 - [Toss Drills](#) (Skill Building Warm-up or Team Drills)
 - [Receiving a Throw at a Base](#)
 - [Three Players, One Base](#) (Team Drills or Skill Building Warm-up)
 - **Infield Plays** - Diagrams ([p.51-55](#))
 - [Pitcher's Drills](#) - especially 1-6, [Turn Glove Side](#)
 - **Base Running** (Skill Building Warm-up or Team Drills)
 - [Through First Base](#)
 - [Two Bases](#)
-

- [Three Groups Drills](#) (Team Drills)
- [Skill Building Warm-up](#)
- [Rain/Wet Day](#)

Additional Drills

- [Cut-Relay to Home](#)
 - teach and train using [Mini Diamond](#)
 - occasionally practice full distance using the Full Field
- [Cut-Relay to home, ball past the OF](#) (Majors)
- **Relay to Third, Ball to Right Field** ...*Shortstop* cover 2b | sees runner will make it to second base, then moves off the base, to their right, get's in line between the Right Fielder and Third Baseman. moves
- [Fly Ball Communication](#)
- [Rundowns](#) ['Ambush']
- [Wild Pitch, Passed Ball Communication](#)

Turn Glove Side

When a player has the ball with their back to their target (e.g. Pitcher: comebacker, throw to second base; Fielding a Bunt, Relay), we want the player to Turn to Their Glove Side. The result of this action is the glove side of the body facing their target, body in proper alignment to throw.

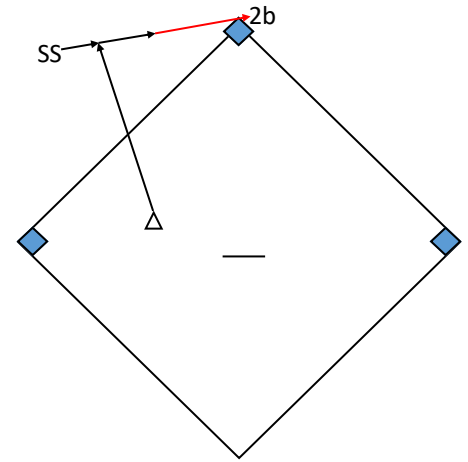
6-4 & 4-6 Using Underhand Toss

Positioning of Players for the Drill:

Shortstop 25' from the base for this drill (rather than the standard 15'), to allow extra room for emphasis on "Move Your Feet to Throw" towards target to power the throw.

Second Baseman plays at the bag for this drill. They stand 'behind' the bag in line with the Shortstop, with the bag between them, in a "Ready Position". The reason for positioning 'behind' the bag is because of the short distance of the throw. Standing 'behind' the bag gives the player covering a little more time to react to the throw.

Coach rolls the ball a couple steps to the Shortstop's left. Shortstop fields, throws and follows their throw. Following the play the players switch positions.



6 - 4 Play

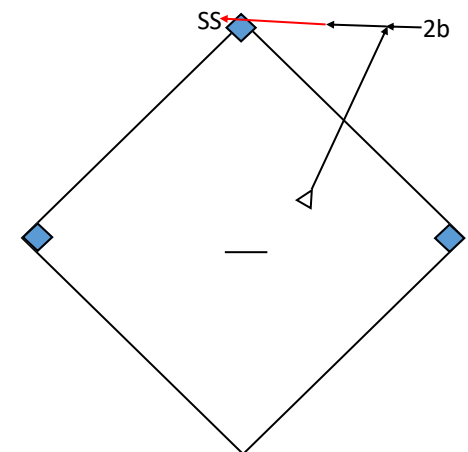
Player's Actions

1. Fields the Ball
2. Underhand Toss
3. Follows the throw

Coach's Teaching Phrases

1. "Wide (feet) to catch"
2. "Move feet (to throw)"
3. "Follow your head"

NOTE: From time to time coaches will likely have to remind the player receiving the throw to be in a "Ready Position".



4 - 6 Play

Same as above, but with Second Baseman fielding and tossing with the Shortstop covering the base.

5-4 Play & 4-3 Play

Two groups working on the field, separate from each other; 2-4 players in each group. If 3 players in a group, have the extra player waiting to be the next to field a ground ball. These are common plays where the players use an overhand throw.

Common Teaching Points for both groups/plays:

(1) Players in a “Ready Position” to start the drill, (2) “Wide (feet) to catch”, (3) “Move feet (to throw)”.

Coaches may have to remind the player receiving the throw to be in a “Ready Position” (not in a ‘stretch’ position). They do not touch the base before catching the ball; Rule: ‘Ball First, Base Second’.

5-4 Play

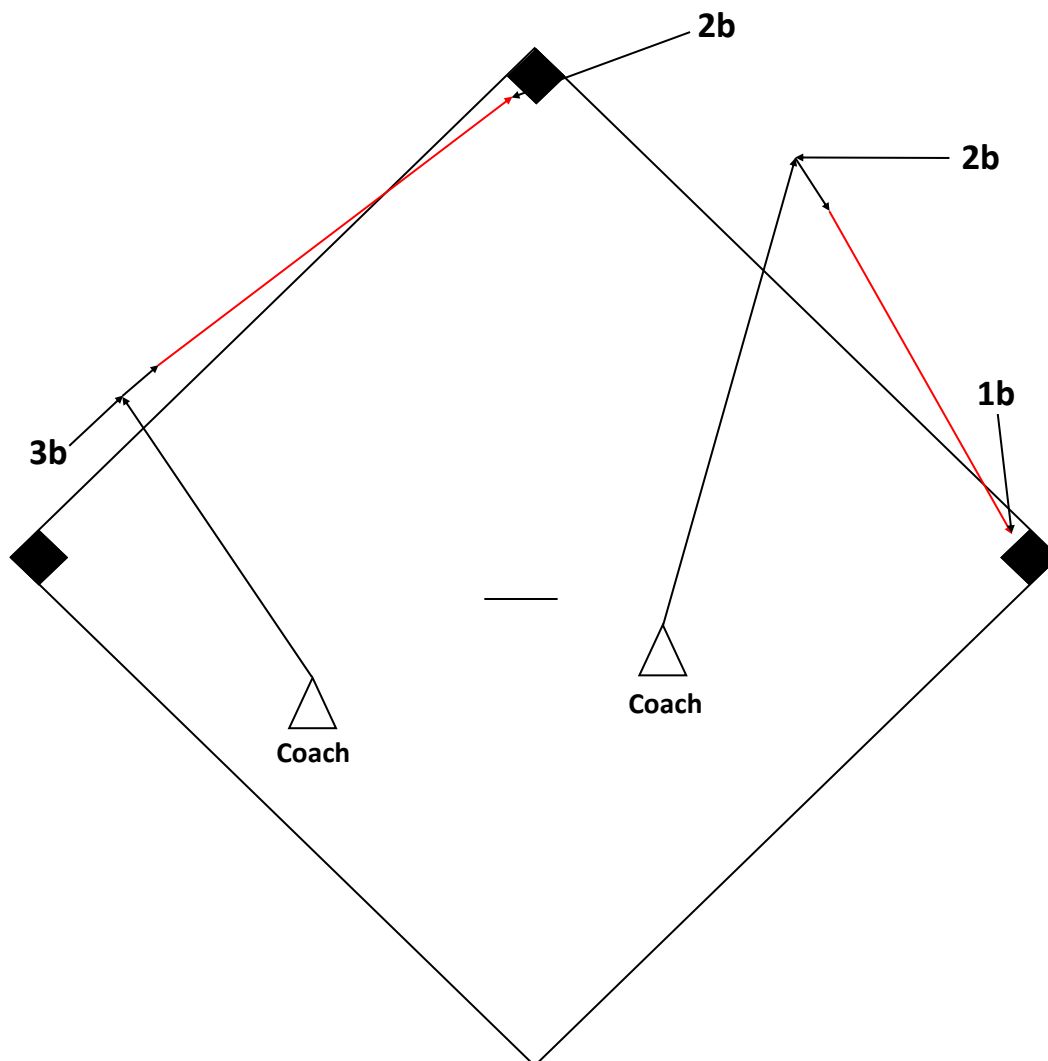
Coach rolls the ball 8’-10’ to the left of the third baseman.

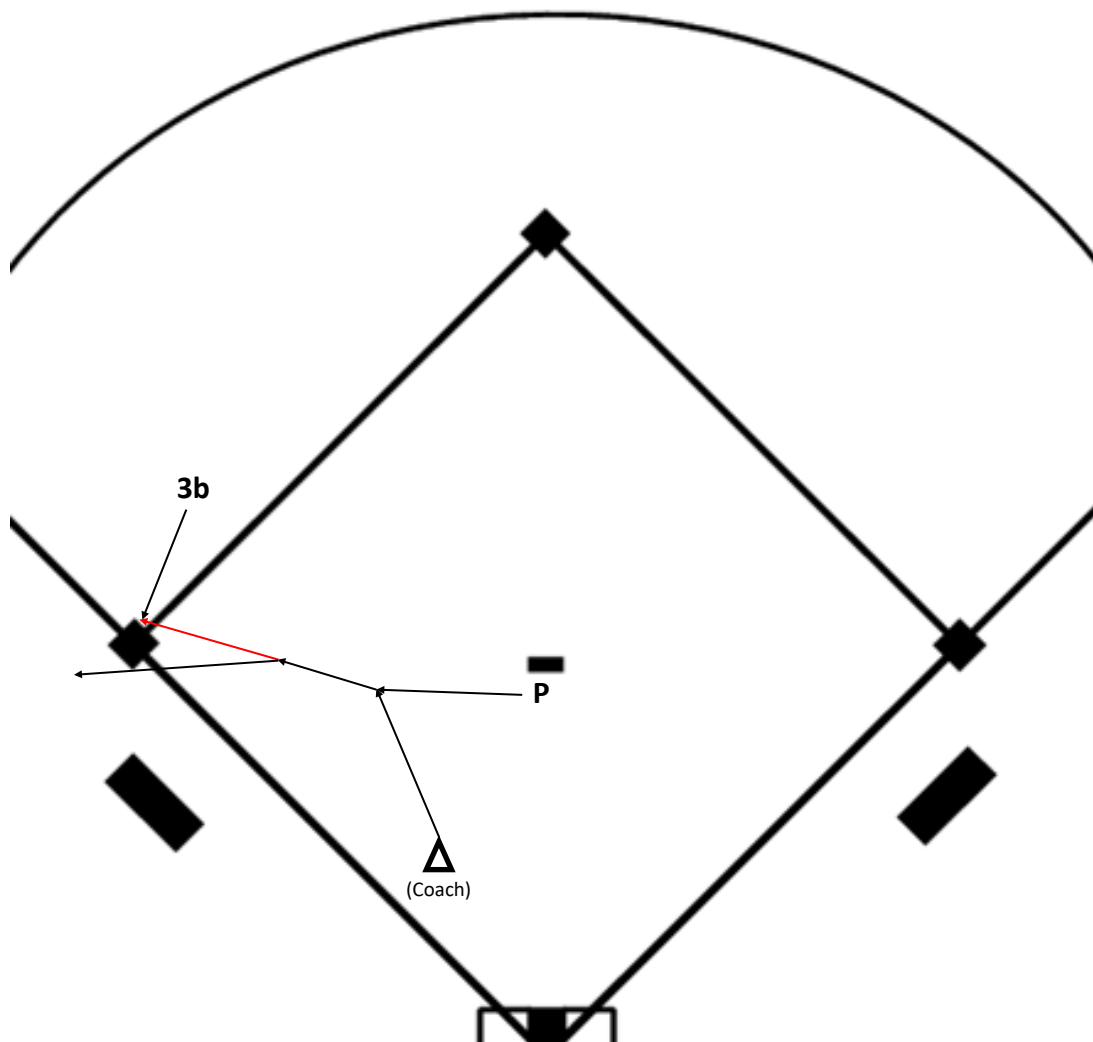
Second Baseman is positioned 10’ from the base (for the purpose of the drill). When the coach rolls the ball, the second baseman moves quickly to the third base side of the bag.

4-3 Play

Coach rolls the ball 8’-10’ to the right of the second baseman, at a pace that allows them to angle in a bit to field the ball.

First Baseman, is positioned 12’-15’ from the base. When the coach rolls the ground ball, they ‘cover the base with their eyes’.





1-3 Play - Skill Building Warm-up (pitcher fielding , underhand toss to first baseman)

1. SET UP:

- Place the pitching rubber, cone, etc. 30'-35' from first base
- Two kids at the pitcher position; two kids at the first base position (15' off the base/foul line)

2. TEACH:

On a ball hit straight back to the pitcher or to the pitcher's left, the pitcher can usually use the underhand toss for the throw to first base.

First Baseman, ***"Cover the base with your eyes"***.

4 DRILL:

Coach rolls the ball a few feet to the pitcher's left.

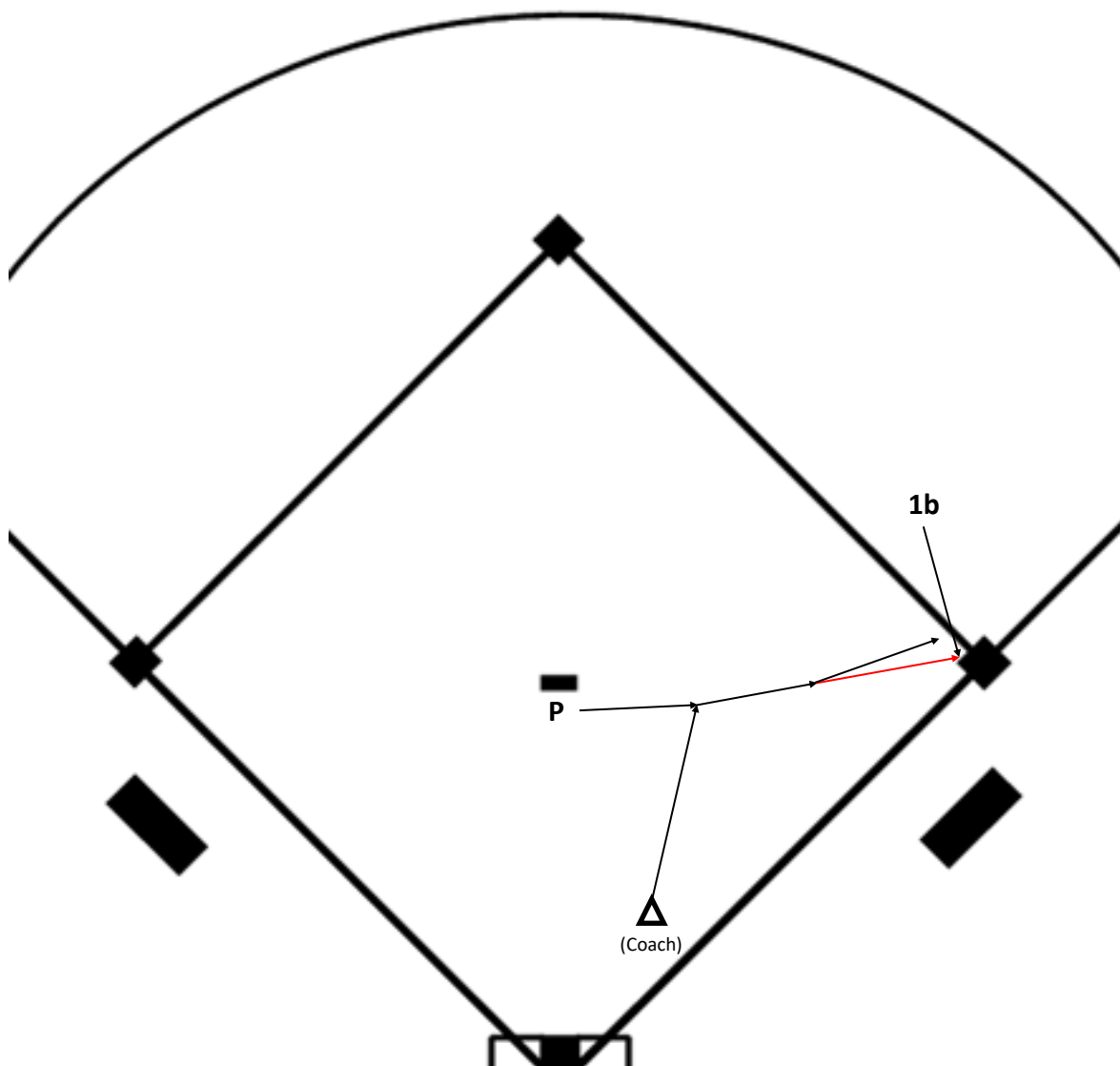
Pitcher fields the ball with "Feet Wide", then runs towards first base - "Move your feet to throw", uses proper underhand toss technique and follows their throw - "Follow your head"

3. OBJECTIVES:

Players come to recognize the value of the underhand toss technique and that it can be successfully used very often.

Players ingrain the habit of getting into a "Ready Position"

First Baseman gets in a "Ready Position", "Moves Their Feet to Catch", gets the "Ball first and the base second", then tags the base with their foot. After finishing the play they roll the ball in to the coach, and then rotates to pitcher.



6-5 Play (shortstop fielding, underhand toss to third baseman)

1. SET UP:

- One player at the pitcher position, one at the third base position and two at the shortstop position

2. TEACH:

On a ball hit to the Pitcher's right, when they don't field the ball, the pitcher *sprints* straight toward third base. If the base is covered (as it is in this drill), they break to a spot in foul territory, in line with the throw to the base.

Third baseman - **“Cover the base with your eyes”**; get in a **“Ready Position”** to prepare for the throw.

Shortstop - SLOW down to field the ball; “(feet) Wide to Catch”. Then “Move Feet” FAST in a straight line toward the target and make an underhand toss. If the third baseman is

3. OBJECTIVES:

The pitcher builds a habit of sprinting to the base when they don't field a ball hit in the infield; recognize when to back-up.

Third baseman “covers the base with their eyes”; shortstop learns to recognize those times they need to delay their

4 DRILL:

Coach rolls a ground ball 10' to the shortstop's right.

Shortstop -“(feet) Wide to Catch”, then “Move Your Feet (to throw)”, then follow their throw - “Follow your head”

Third Baseman - **“Cover the base with your eyes”**, gets in a “Ready Position”, “Moves Their Feet to Catch”, gets the “Ball First and the Base Second”. Then shuffle a couple of steps, in a ‘power Position’ towards ‘The middle of the infield’. **“Looking for Other Runners”** After finishing the play, rotate to the pitcher position. Underhand toss the ball in to the coach on the way.

Pitcher sprints toward third, sees the base is covered, breaks into foul ground as far beyond the base as there is room up to 20' - 30'.

