

Baseball Fielding Drills for Quick Hands and Feet

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Baseball bats [have changed at the collegiate and high school levels](#), and defense has become more important than ever. For evidence, look no further than the 2011 Division I stats. Since bat standards changed in 2010, the D-I national batting average has fallen 25 points, and scoring has dropped by an average of one full run per game.

With run production down, coaches are placing more value on each potential run. And with this value comes a renewed appreciation for infielders who prevent runs through their defense. Want to instantly become more valuable to your team? Improve your defense by developing quick hands and feet through the following three baseball fielding drills, which you should perform before each infield training session.

Baseball Fielding Drills

Short Hop Infield Drill

Grab a partner and get into a balanced fielding position. Place your throwing hand behind your back and your glove in front of your body. To reinforce your top hand, you can also try placing your throwing hand in front of your body.

Standing 10 to 15 feet away, your partner starts bouncing ground balls one to two feet directly in front of you. Practice catching by holding your glove at the same angle as the ball to give yourself the greatest amount of surface area to catch the ball cleanly. To add a degree of difficulty and to build confidence and control for double plays, try flipping the ball back to your partner with your glove instead of your hand.

On the 10th repetition, "play it live" by bringing your throwing hand to its normal fielding position and squaring up to the appropriate base. Feel free to add a throw to a third partner or a soft toss net. After performing short hops straight on, repeat for the forehand and backhand.

Ball Handling Drill

Develop your exchanges and quickness through this simple ball-handling drill. Start in an athletic stance with a ball in your glove. For either 30 seconds or 15 reps, move your glove in a clockwise motion around each leg, repeatedly exchanging the ball from your glove to your throwing hand. Repeat in a counterclockwise motion. Work on getting through this baseball fielding drill as quickly as possible to train your hands to move faster in and out of your glove. After completing the drill through your right and left legs, try it with your feet together, then in a figure-eight pattern.

Ball-in-Hand Ground Ball Drill

To get into the proper fielding position to catch a short hop off the ground or a waist-high big hop, you need active feet. Practice active feet by placing a ball in your throwing hand and having your partner either roll or hit a ground ball directly to you. While still holding the baseball in your throwing hand, field the ground ball with your glove. Holding a ball in your throwing hand forces you to get in front of the ground ball and field it without the crutch of your top hand. You'll also learn to get into the correct position faster by counting the ball's hops.

Continue through this infielder drill by working at different depths (if indoors, adjust distances away from the partner). The closer you are, the faster you have to react. Start at the cut of the grass, working on your backhand and simulating plays at the plate. Gradually work back toward the outfield cut of the grass in two-out depth, working on "routine" ground balls hit directly at you and to your forehand side.

Take 10-15 ground balls at each infield depth—infield in, halfway, double play depth, two-out depth, etc.—with a ball in hand; then proceed with the infield session, playing it live. Depending on the number of fielders participating in the drill series, you may incorporate throws to bases after fielding each ground ball. If it is an individual session, the fielder can place the balls in a bucket once they are fielded.

Infield Warm-Up Drill Progression

Short Hops — 1x10

- Straight On
- Forehand
- Backhand (Right Foot Planted)
- Backhand (Left Foot Planted)

Ball Handling — 1x30 seconds or 15 reps

- Right Leg
- Left Leg
- Feet Together
- Figure 8

Ball-in-Hand Ground Ball Progression — 1x10-15

- Cut of Grass
- Halfway
- Standard Depth
- Double Play Depth
- Two-Out Depth

Photo: APP.com

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