



Blocking Pitches

Objective

To block and control wild pitches

Setup

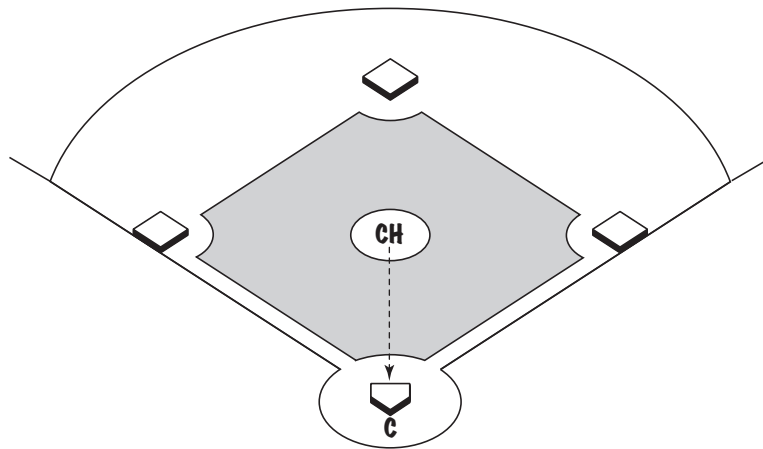
Bucket of balls (softer balls for younger players), catchers, and a coach to pitch

Execution

Coach throws three wild pitches. Catchers block the pitches and allow the next catcher to step in. The catcher earns a point for each ball that is blocked and kept in front of his or her body. Cones can be set up in front of home plate to indicate preferred areas for blocked balls.

Make It Fun

A point system can be developed to differentiate between blocked balls.





Throwing Out Runners

Objective

To prevent runner from stealing second or third

Setup

Catchers, pitchers (or coach to pitch), 2B, SS, 3B (only when throwing to third), bucket of balls, baserunners

Execution

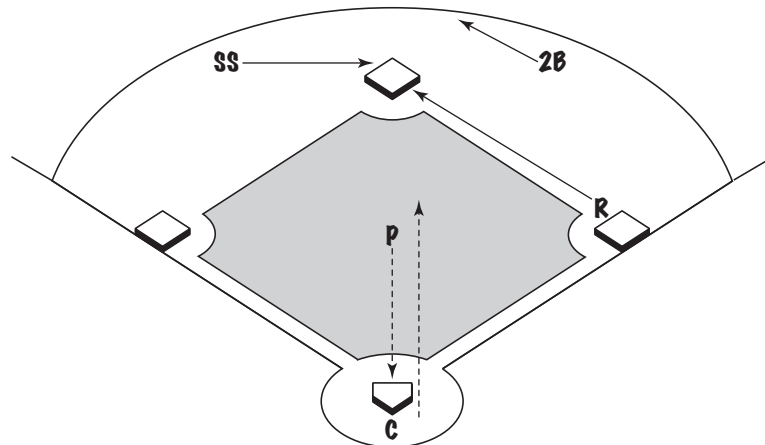
Pitcher throws three pitches. Runner must attempt to steal on one of the three pitches. Shortstop communicates coverage to second baseman. Second and short alternate taking throws. This gives them an opportunity to cover on steals as well. Person covering gets to the bag as quickly as possible. Other player backs up the throw once the pitch has gotten to the catcher. Receiver of the throw straddles the bag and lets the ball travel all the way there. Get off the bag to block errant throws. Baserunners should work on reading the pitchers, getting a good jump, and proper sliding. Catchers alternate turns. Drill can be repeated with runners attempting to steal third.

Multi-tasking

This drill provides a team with the opportunity to practice several fundamentals of team defense. First basemen can be included so that pitchers can work on holding runners on. When runners are stealing third, pickoff plays to second can be practiced to help keep runners close. If you really want to multi-task, you can have the first basemen hold runners on and then after the catcher throws the ball you can hit a ground ball to first and work on having the pitcher cover first. You also can hit comebackers to the pitchers after the catchers throw.

Make It Fun

Catchers are awarded a point every time they throw out a runner.





Blocking the Plate

Objective

To block the plate correctly on a ground ball to the infield in hopes of preventing the runner from scoring

Setup

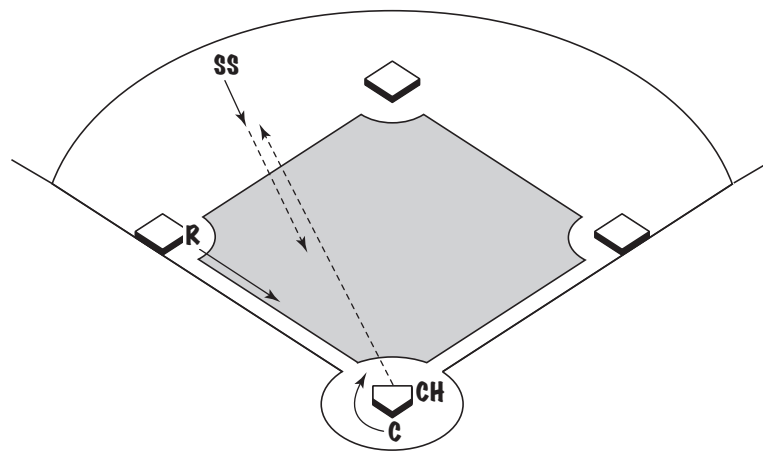
Catchers, baserunners, all infielders, coach to hit ground balls

Execution

Coach hits a ground ball to any infielder. The infield is playing in, simulating a game situation. Runner goes on contact and attempts to score. Infielder throws to catcher, who blocks the plate and attempts to tag the runner out.

Make It Fun

Infielder and catcher each get a point for a successful tag out.





Fielding Bunts

Objective

To learn the fundamentals of fielding a bunt and deciding where to throw the ball

Setup

Catchers, pitchers (or coaches), 1B, 2B, SS, bucket of balls, batters, and baserunners

Execution

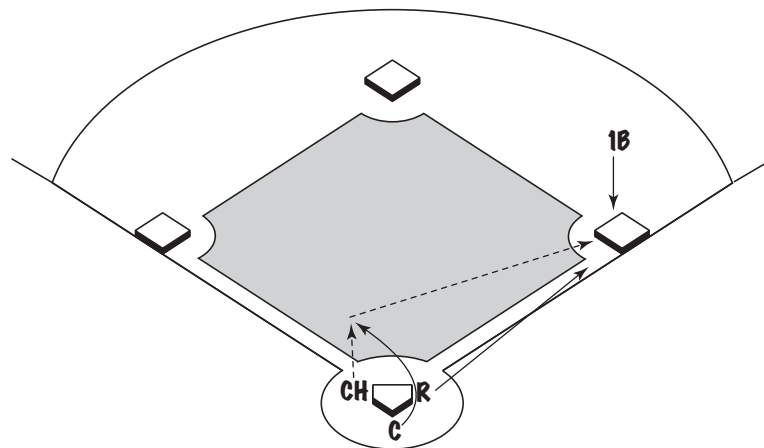
Pitcher or coach delivers a pitch to home plate. A baserunner is at first. The batter attempts to bunt the ball using the proper fundamentals. First baseman charges. Catcher will be the only one attempting to field this bunt and throws runner out at first or second. Second baseman covers first and shortstop covers second.

Multi-tasking

All infielders can be incorporated in this drill to make it more realistic and to work on many team fundamentals. Basic bunt coverages can be practiced. The catcher can work on communicating who should field the bunt and to which base the ball should be thrown. Second basemen work on covering first on bunt attempts. Runners work on taking a lead and seeing the bunt on the ground before breaking. Pitchers practice fielding bunts and holding runners on. First and third basemen work on fielding bunts and trying to throw runners out. For older teams, all bunt defenses and all situations can be practiced.

Make It Fun

Catcher is awarded a point for throwing a runner out at first and two points for throwing a runner out at second.



Catching

Key Points for Blocking Pitches

1. Anticipate the ball in the dirt, especially with two strikes on a batter or runners on base.
2. Place your throwing hand behind mitt and glove between legs to keep balls from rolling through.
3. Keep your butt as close to the ground as possible.
4. Curl shoulders and swing hips around to create angles parallel to the plate and help guide the ball in front of you.
5. Try to smother the ball with the chest protector; mitt stays in position on the ground between the legs.
6. Keep chin down to avoid getting hit in neck.
7. Take your mask over the spot where the pitch bounces.
8. Try to block the ball into fair territory
9. Whichever direction you have to move to block, turn that shoulder in toward home plate.
10. Block wild pitches to the sides at a 45-degree angle to deaden the ball around home plate.
11. Move forward and down on balls in the dirt; get to knees as quickly as possible.
12. Pick up the ball with the bare hand after blocking.

Keys to Throwing Out Runners

1. Footwork is key; anticipate a steal on every pitch.
2. Catch the ball first, but don't reach for the pitch; get the call for the pitcher first.
3. Catch the ball as close to body as possible so you can get it out of the glove more quickly.
4. Use a four-seam grip.
5. Get momentum toward the base you are throwing to, pointing front shoulder toward target.
6. Release the ball as quickly as possible, but try to stay balanced.

Catching

K e y s t o B l o c k i n g t h e P l a t e

1. Set up in front of plate so you can see runner and fielder.
2. Assume athletic position (knees slightly bent) with left foot pointed up the third-base line, tempting runner to slide to outside of plate.
3. Leave mask on if possible.
4. Give fielder target with two hands out in front of the body.
5. Be relaxed; anticipate a bad throw.
6. Catch the ball first!
7. Put the ball in your throwing hand inside the mitt quickly.
8. Turn your head to see runner's path.
9. If runner slides, push body down and across the base path.
10. If runner doesn't slide, stay athletic and tag the runner with the bare hand holding onto the ball inside the glove.

K e y s t o F i e l d i n g B u n t s

1. Know the game situation: score, which bases are occupied, number of outs.
2. Keep knees bent; stay in athletic position.
3. Pick up the ball with the bare hand ... the first time! Glove can be used to assist bare hand.
4. Don't wait for the pitcher; anticipate that you will field the bunt.
5. Keep feet moving to get front shoulder lined up with target.
6. Step in the direction of the target and walk toward the target after the release.
7. On bunts down the first base line, take one or two steps toward the infield before throwing to clear yourself from the runner.