

Infield Approach

Ready Positions

When you get in the ready position, you need to be ready to field a hot line drive AND ready to move. Many players forget the second part (ready to move). They crouch down with their feet very wide, their gloves almost on the ground, and their palms facing the hitter. When the ball comes, these players probably look like they're holding a skillet rather than a glove.

Just as a hitter needs to stay relaxed to be quick, the same also applies to an infielder. The ready position described above creates a couple of problems for the fielder.

1. It's not very comfortable to be that low, which can cause tension, not only in the legs, but in the arms and hands as well.
2. It's not the best position to be ready to move. You're certainly not going to stay that low as you go after a hard ground ball hit 15 feet to your right.

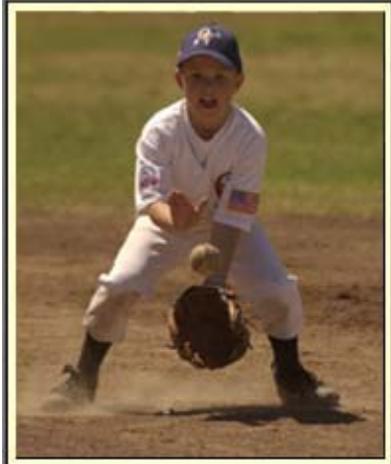
The ready position is an athletic position that allows you to move quickly in any direction.

1. Bend your knees and back comfortably
2. Place your feet a little wider than shoulder width apart
3. Put your weight on the inside balls of your feet so you can push off in either direction easily
4. Place your arms out in front of your body but comfortable and not too far away
5. Extend your hands naturally; while you don't want the back of your glove facing the pitcher, you also don't need to have it completely open and facing the hitter. Many players have their palms facing each other at the ball crosses the plate.

Pre-Pitch Routine

Most players devise a pre-pitch routine that puts them in the ready position as the ball crosses the plate. This may be a shuffle of the feet or a little hop. Whatever method you use, make sure you're balanced, comfortable, and ready to move. Get your momentum moving forward. Don't sit back on your heels. You want to be aggressive and play the ball rather than have the ball play you. This can only be done if you're moving forward and ready.

http://www.qcbaseball.com/drills/baseball_drills1.aspx



Matt's in perfect position to field a grounder

Unless the ball is absolutely ripped at you and you don't have time, get in the habit of moving toward the grounder as you prepare to field it. Notice the word 'charge' wasn't used -- that word implies running towards it as fast as you can. Unless it's a slow roller, you want to approach the ball in a controlled manner that is aggressive but not out of control. This allows you to make adjustments so you're not catching it off a short hop or taking it off the first bounce on the infield dirt. As you get closer to the ball, begin breaking down to get into position to field the ball. To do this, shorten your steps and widen your feet. Bend not only at the knees but also with your back. Put your hands out in front of your body and open your glove toward the ball with your bare hand on top.

Drill:

Tee 1-2-3

Purpose:

This drill helps a player and coach isolate and work on different aspects of hitting

Equipment:

Bat; Batting Tee; Baseballs

Setup:

This drill can be used as a batting practice station.

Execution:

Hitter will take his stance. Coach or parent will call out 1,2,3. Make sure you don't rush. The idea is to give the player and coach the opportunity to check his position at each pause. It also gives the coach a chance to see and correct problems that he may not notice when the player is hitting without a pause. Player will take his stance with a ball on the tee.

1. Player will coil and hold.
2. Player will stride keeping weight back and pause.
3. Player will complete his swing.

There are a few common problems that players make when catching a ground ball.

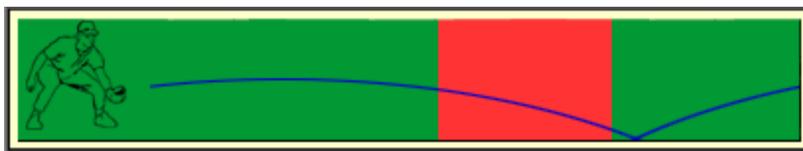
1. Not catching the ball out in front.
By doing this, you cannot watch the ball all the way into your glove; most likely you are bending either with your knees or back but not both.

When you catch the ball under you, you lose the ability to give with your hands. You want 'soft hands', a term used to describe a fielder who catches the ball out front of his body and seems to suck up the ball from that position into a position to throw. With soft hands, you can make last second adjustments to a bounce that was different than expected.

2. Poorly Positioned Hands
Your glove must be in a good position to field the ball: open and close to vertical. This gives you the most area to catch the ball.

Short Hop

In all situations, try to avoid catching the ball on a short hop. In the diagram below, the approximate area of the short hop is shown in red. Catching the ball on a short hop is a difficult play to make. It takes practice for players to get in good position to avoid fielding a short hop. The following link is a good drill for players to work on the necessary footwork for avoiding a short hop: [Short Hop Drill](#)



Backhand

The backhand play is one of the most difficult to make. Poor technique and lack of practice are two of the biggest reasons why players struggle with the backhand play.

As you approach the ball you will either field it with your left foot forward or right foot forward depending on when you get to it. Many players will practice fielding a backhand only one way, but the fact is you will have to make the play both ways so make sure you practice both ways of fielding a backhand. Either way you want to make sure you keep your glove in front of your face. You want to watch the ball all the way into the glove.

Lean forward slightly as the pitcher is ready to pitch, and extend your glove in front of you with the glove's pocket-side facing up. Keep your glove at or below knee level.

Keep your eye on the ball as the pitch is delivered. Stay close to the ground, which will help you move quickly in any direction. Try to stay in front of sharply hit ground balls.

Charge a slowly hit grounder by running toward the ball.

When scooping up the ball, try to keep your **body** perpendicular to the path of the ball.

Spread your legs enough to be well-balanced, but not enough to leave a large gap between your hands and legs.

Bend down to reach the ball and use both hands to scoop it up toward the middle of your body. If you are unable to catch the ball, block it or knock it down to the ground.

Put your glove flat on the ground if the ball is a "grass cutter" (one that doesn't bounce at all), and use your throwing hand to keep the ball from rolling up your fielding arm.