

Fundamentals of Outfield

Patriot Athletic League

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Pre-Pitch Preparedness

- Before each pitch, outfielders should get into **a ready position**.
 - Outfielders should be on the **balls of the feet**.
 - The **feet** can be kept **even or** the player can use a **staggered stance** as their ready position.
 - Being in a good ready position allows your outfielders to get better jumps off of the bat.
 - **Use batting practice as a way to improve getting good jumps on the ball off the bat**



The First Step

- The first step is key in helping outfielders get to a batted ball and make a play.
 - The best outfielders generally have the most direct first step.
 - If the ball is hit over the player's head:
 - they should drop step by pivoting their hips so the first step is straight back or 180 degrees from the ready stance in the direction of the ball.
 - Opening up the hips gives your outfielder a better chance to turn and run to where the ball will land.
 - Remember: A good time for your outfielders to work on their first step technique is during batting practice.

Anticipating a Hit

- It is important that your outfielders know where the play may be before the ball is hit. Teach your outfielders to work through possible situations in their head if the ball is hit to them. Some situations your outfielders should know and think about are:
 1. The **number of outs**.
 2. **Where the baserunners are** and the **speed** of the runners.
 3. **The score**.
 4. **Where the play will be** if the ball is hit to them as a ground ball, fly ball, or if it is hit in the gap.



Ground Ball Fundamentals

- Teach your outfielders to always break hard for a ball, even if it is hit directly at an infielder. They should get in the habit of backing up your infielders.
 - When charging and approaching the ball, have your players break down using choppy steps.
 - Outfielders should field the ball off of the glove-side leg and come through the ball when fielding.
 - Make sure your outfielders are always fielding the ball out in front of the body.
 - Your outfielder is the last line of defense for your team, so they cannot let the ball bounce over or under their gloves.
 - **With no runners on base at the younger levels, your outfielders can go to their throwing-side knee to field a ground ball.** If going to one knee, they should not be lazy and take too much time because the runner could advance to the next base.
 - Outfielders should come up to throw with a long arm and keep their fingers on top of the ball to avoid throwing side-armed.
 - Make sure they field the ball, crow hop, and throw the ball through the cut-off man.

Fly Ball Fundamentals

- Teach your outfielders to run full-speed to a fly ball. Unless they have to make a running catch, the outfielder should have enough time to get to the spot and wait to catch the ball.
 - An outfielder should never be directly under the ball, but keep it at a slight angle. This allows the outfielder to move toward the target before they actually catch the ball.
 - Make sure your outfielders are looking the ball into the glove when catching a fly ball.
 - Outfielders should catch the ball with two hands on the throwing side of the body.
 - When your outfielders catch the ball, they should have momentum into the throwing motion.
 - On a sliding catch, have your outfielders use the pop-up slide technique with the glove out to the side.
 - As a general note, a fly ball will always curve toward the foul lines.



Outfield Positioning

- Depending on the batter, you may position your outfield to help them get to the ball quicker.
 - For left-handed hitters who pull the ball, or right-handed hitters who often hit to the opposite field, you can shift your outfielders toward the right field foul line.
 - For right-handed hitters that pull the ball, or left-handed hitters who often hit to the opposite field, you can shift your outfielders toward the left field line.
 - For hitters who often hit shallow fly balls, you can move your outfielders in toward the infield.
 - For hitters who have more power and often hit the ball to the fence, you can move your outfielders back toward the fence.

Backing up Outfielders

- As a general rule, the outfielder closest to the player fielding the ball should be backing up the play.
 - Your outfielders should understand that the sharper the angle of a fly ball, the farther it will roll if missed.
 - This means a high fly ball will be less likely to bounce far away, while a line drive will roll a long way.
- Ground balls follow the same rule. Sometimes, a ball will take a bad hop, skip over the outfielder's glove, and roll a long way.
 - If a fellow outfielder does not back them up, then the runner will likely be able to take extra bases.



Backing up Infielders

- Whether the ball is hit directly to the infielder or to either side, your outfielders should always break to back up the infielder. If an infielder makes an error on a ball hit directly at them and the outfielder has not moved to back him up, the runner could easily take an extra base.
- Your outfielders should also back up throws from infielders to the bases, including pickoffs.

