



***YOUTH BASEBALL***

**SUCCESS SYSTEM**

**Game Situation Defenses**

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## Fielding Ground Balls

Before we get started with the game situation defense drills, let's review some basic fundamentals for fielding ground balls in the infield

- The infielder should begin in the ready position, with his feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart, knees bent and weight over the balls of the feet. His head should be facing home plate with his eyes on the ball. The hands should hang low between the legs, with the glove open wide. From this ready position, the player can get a good jump on the ball and move quickly in the direction it is hit.
- To field the ball off the ground, the fielder's knees should be bent and the buttocks lowered to knee level. His back should be almost parallel to the ground, and both arms should be outstretched in front of the body.
- The back of the fielder's glove should be on the ground with the throwing hand either above it or alongside it. The fielder's eyes should be focused on the ball.
- When the ball arrives, the player should watch it into the glove and then trap it with the throwing hand. The player then cushions the ball toward his body with "soft" hands, bringing the hands to the belt area (this is called funneling the ball) as he moves into throwing position.

# Pitchers and First Basemen

## Setup

Place a line of players at the pitcher's mound and a line of players behind first base. The coach stands at home plate with a fungo bat and balls. A catcher is in his stance behind the plate.

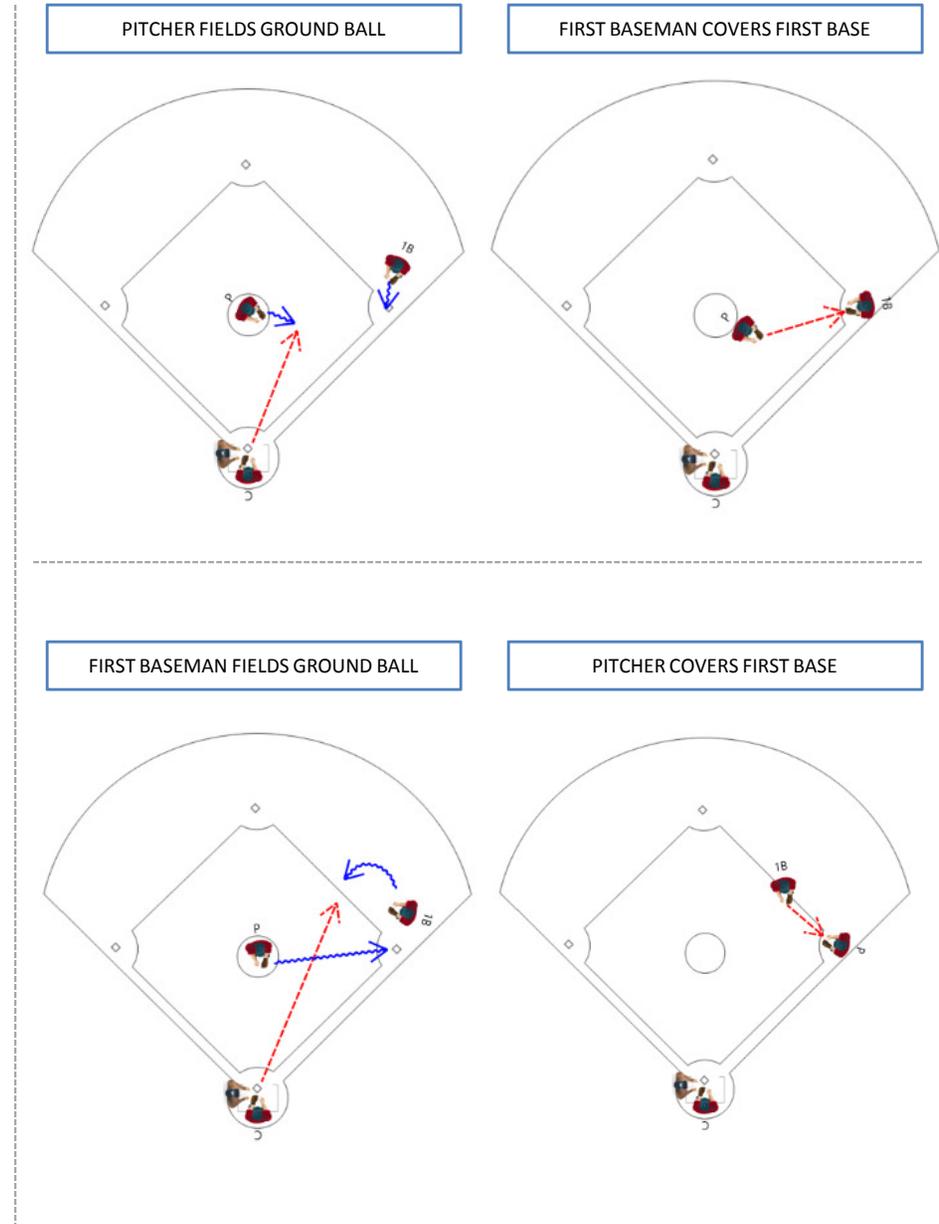
## Execution

The first player in the pitcher's line will simulate throwing a pitch. The coach will then hit a slow ground ball to the area between the pitcher and first baseman.

If the pitcher fields the ball, the first baseman will cover first and the pitcher will make the throw to him. If the first baseman fields the ball, the pitcher will cover first. The players will rotate to the back of the line after each rep.

## Coaching Tips

- The player who is fielding the ball should always call "Ball" loud and clear
- The player who is covering first base will call "Bag"
- Ball should always be called first, and Bag called second
- If the pitcher takes 3 steps and does not call Ball, the first baseman calls Ball
- The first baseman is the captain - he gets the final decision on who will play the ball
- The pitcher should always tag first base with his right foot and stay inside the baseline, to avoid colliding with the runner
- Use an underhand toss for short range throws
- If you have several multi-position players, have them switch lines after every player has had a turn, so they can run the drill from multiple positions



# Pitchers, Second Basemen and First Basemen

## Setup

Place a line of players at the pitcher's mound, a line of players playing second base, and a line of players playing first base. The coach stands at home plate with a fungo bat and balls. A catcher is in his stance behind the plate.

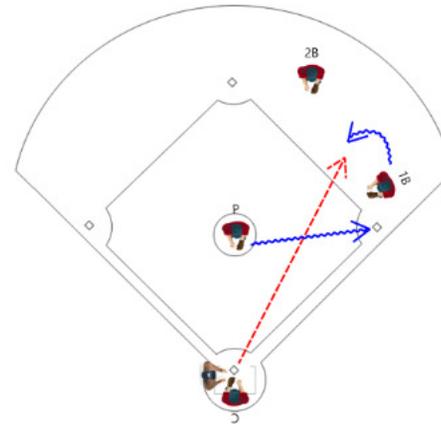
## Execution

The first player in the pitcher's line will simulate throwing a pitch. The coach will then hit a slow ground ball to the area between first base and second base. Both the first baseman and second baseman will go after the ball, while the pitcher covers first.

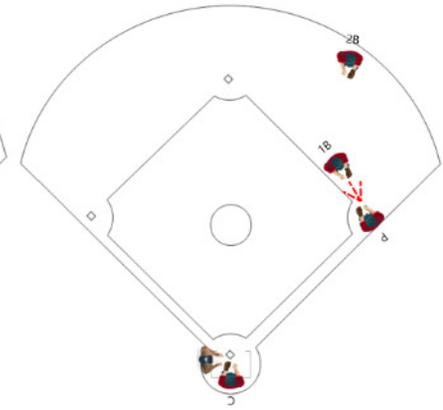
## Coaching Tips

- The player who is fielding the ball should always call "Ball" loud and clear
- The player who is covering first base will call "Bag"
- Ball should always be called first, and Bag called second
- The first baseman should try to cover as much territory as he can, because the pitcher will know to cover first base for him.
- The second baseman will take any ball that is not called by the first baseman or pitcher
- The pitcher should always be prepared to cover first base on any ball hit to the right side of the infield. The first baseman will often be out of position, even if the second baseman ended up fielding the ball
- If you have several multi-position players, have them switch lines after every player has had a turn, so they can run the drill from multiple positions
- Emphasize the importance of communication and coverage for this drill
- The pitcher should always tag first base with his right foot and stay inside the baseline, to avoid colliding with the runner

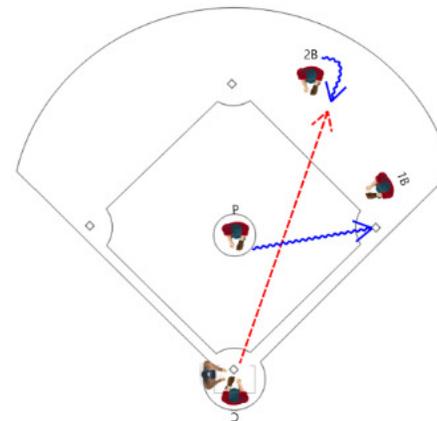
FIRST BASEMAN FIELDS BALL IN THE GAP



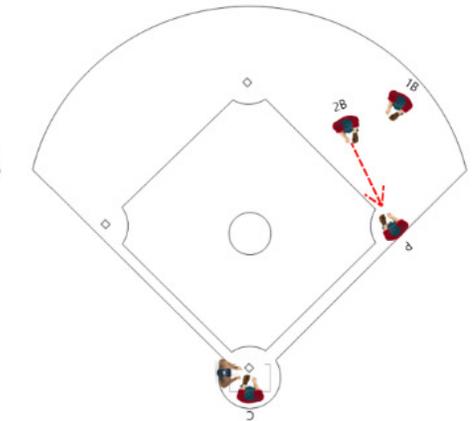
PITCHER COVERS FIRST BASE



SECOND BASEMAN FIELDS BALL IN THE GAP



PITCHER COVERS FIRST BASE



# Pitchers, Shortstops and First Basemen - Double Play Ball

## Setup

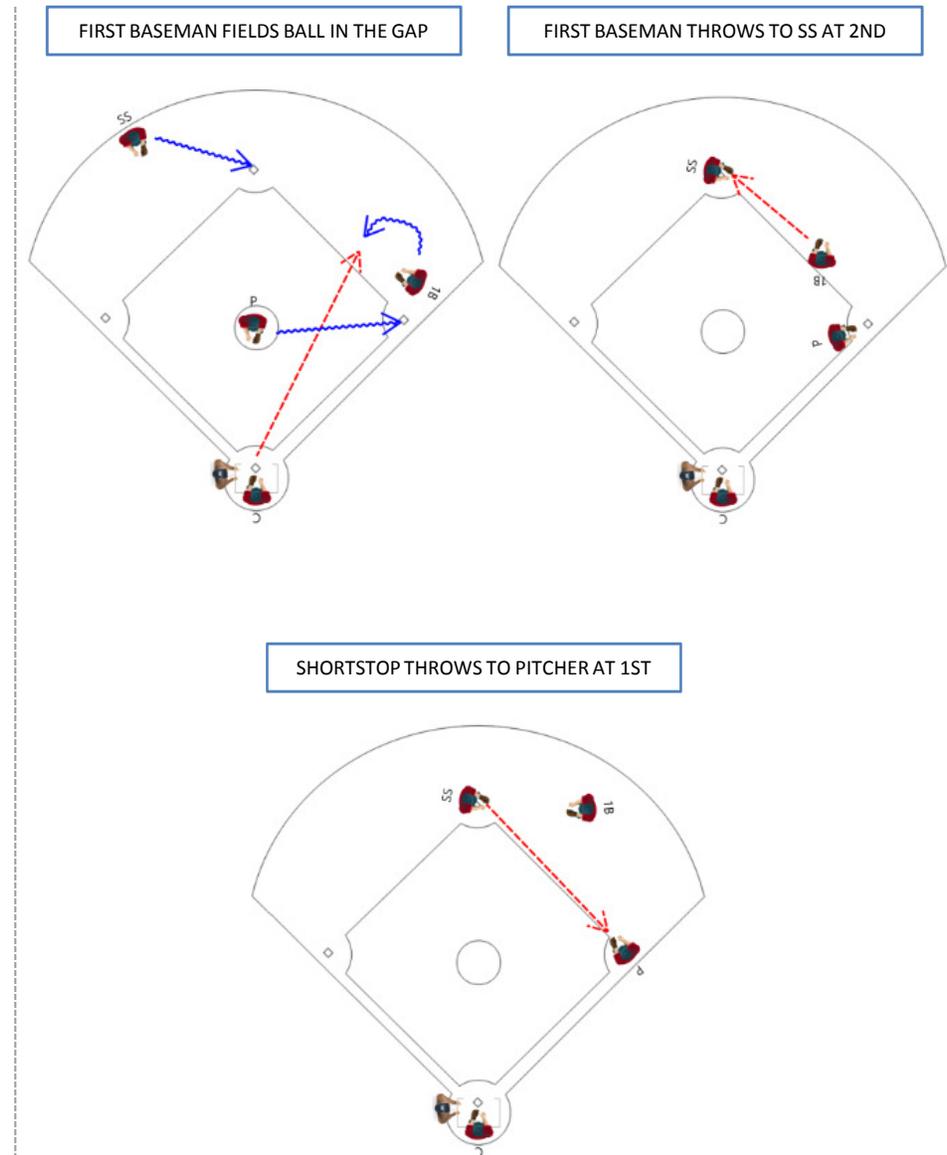
Place a line of players at the pitcher's mound, a line of players playing short stop, and a line of players playing first base. The coach stands at home plate with a fungo bat and balls. A catcher is in his stance behind the plate.

## Execution

The first player in the pitcher's line will simulate throwing a pitch. The coach will then hit a slow ground ball to the first baseman. The shortstop will cover second base and receive the throw. He will then make the throw back to first base, where the pitcher is covering.

## Coaching Tips

- The player who is fielding the ball should always call "Ball" loud and clear
- The player who is covering first base will call "Bag"
- Ball should always be called first, and Bag called second
- With a runner on first, against a right handed batter, the shortstop should set up around eight steps away from second base, and eight steps behind the baseline. Against a lefty, he can cheat around four steps toward second base.
- The first baseman should clear out of the infield after making his throw, to allow a clean line of sight from the shortstop to the first baseman
- When receiving the throw at second base, the shortstop should run hard to get within 3 feet of the bag, then break down to prepare to catch the ball while keeping his feet active and live. This will allow him to react to a bad throw without losing his balance or momentum
- After receiving the ball, the short stop should tag the bag with his throwing side foot (right foot for right handed players), and then step with his glove side foot in order to make the throw to first.
- The pitcher should always tag first base with his right foot and stay inside the baseline, to avoid colliding with the runner
- If you have several multi-position players, have them switch lines after every player has had a turn, so they can run the drill from multiple positions



# Pitchers, Third Basemen, Catchers and First Basemen - Bunt Defense

## Setup

Place a line of players at the pitcher's mound, a line of players playing third base, and a line of players playing first base. The coach stands at home plate with a fungo bat and balls. A catcher is in his stance behind the plate.

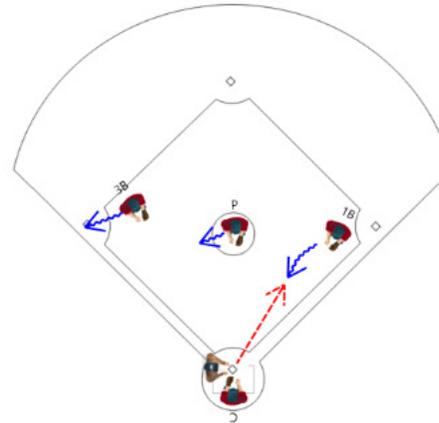
## Execution

The first player in the pitcher's line will simulate throwing a pitch, then immediately break to the third baseline. The coach will then bunt to the right side or left side, and force the first baseman, pitcher, or third baseman to make a play, based on the rules below.

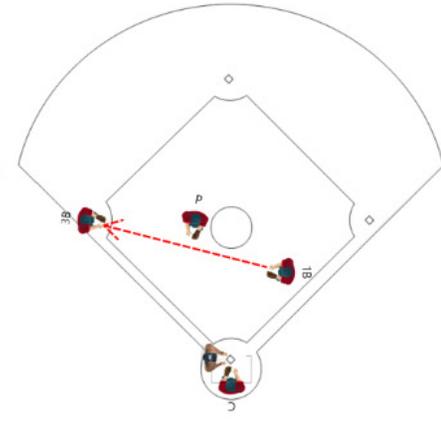
## Coaching Tips

- The player who is fielding the ball should always call "Ball" loud and clear, ideally within the fielders first three steps after the bunter makes contact
- The player who is covering the base will call "Bag"
- Ball should always be called first, and Bag called second
- For simplicity, you can divide up the field into slices of pie
- The first baseman is responsible for the slice of pie from first base to the pitcher's mound, including any ball which is bunted directly up the middle. He will begin the play three steps off the bag and eight steps in. If he fields it, he will throw to third to get the advancing baserunner.
- The pitcher is responsible for the area from the mound to the third baseline. If the batter is showing bunt, the pitcher must be ready to break to the third baseline immediately after releasing the ball. If he fields it, he will throw to third base.
- The third basemen will begin the play four steps off the bag and two steps in, and only make a play on the ball if the pitcher is unable to (or does not call "Ball"). If he fields it, he will throw to first. If the pitcher fields it, he will return to the bag to make a play on the baserunner coming from second.
- If you have several multi-position players, have them switch lines after every player has had a turn, so they can run the drill from multiple positions

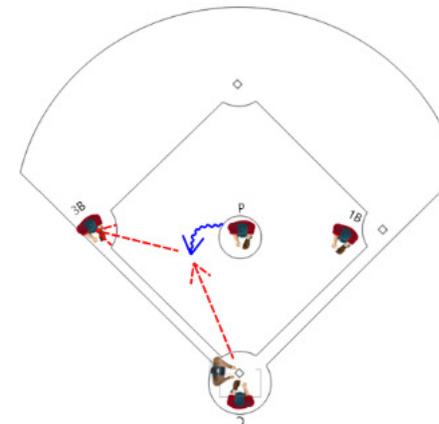
FIRST BASEMAN FIELDS THE BUNT



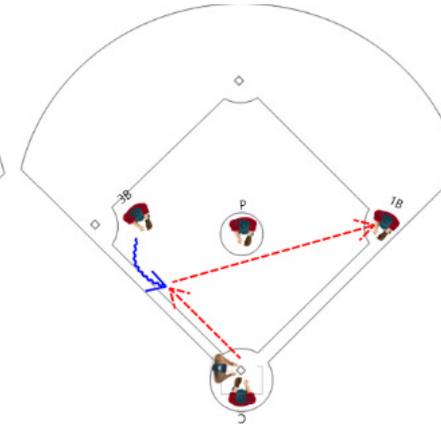
FIRST BASEMAN THROWS TO THIRD



PITCHER FIELDS AND THROWS TO 3RD



3RD BASEMAN FIELDS AND THROWS TO 1ST



# Pitchers, Shortstops, Third Basemen, Outfielders - Pickoff Plays, Relays, and Backups

## Setup

Place a line of players at the pitcher's mound, a line of players playing third base, a line of players playing shortstop, and players in each of the three outfield positions. The coach stands at home plate with a fungo bat and balls. A catcher is in his stance behind the plate.

## Execution

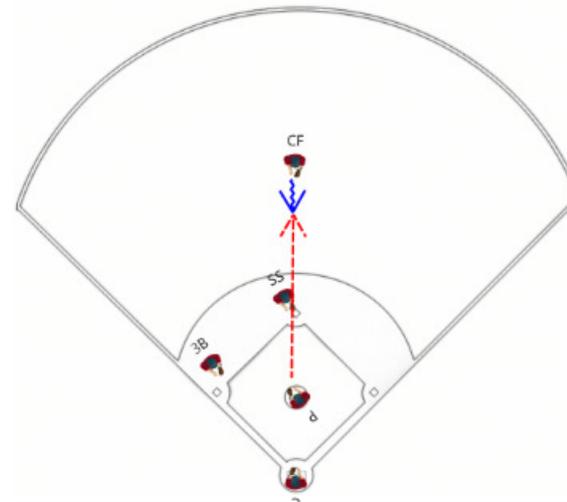
The first player in the pitcher's line will start by attempting a pickoff play to second base. He will intentionally throw it over the shortstop's head, so it sails into the outfield. Anticipating the play at third, the pitcher will immediately sprint to the area behind third base as a backup.

The shortstop will intentionally let the ball over his head to the center fielder, the move to the edge of the infield to assume the position of cutoff man. The center fielder will play the errant throw off the ground, then make a strong throw to third base, using the cutoff man if necessary.

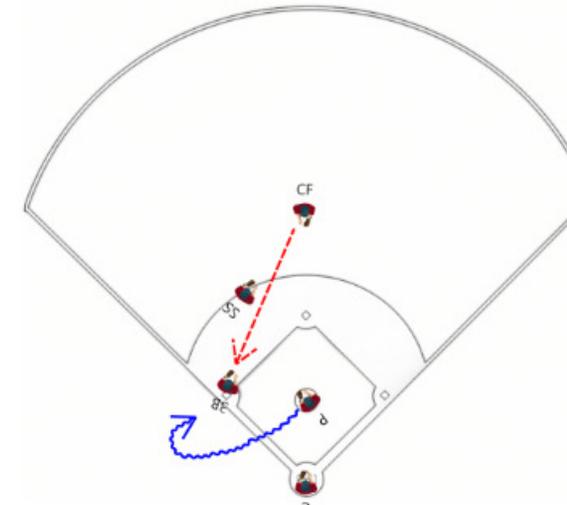
## Coaching Tips

- The pitcher should use this as an opportunity to work on his pickoff move to second
- While playing backup, the pitcher should imagine a rope that connects the thrower and receiver of the ball, then extend that rope 10-15 feet behind the receiver to establish his backup position
- The pitcher will need to sprint hard to reach the backup position behind third. Make sure he is hustling with urgency.
- To play the ball in the outfield, the center fielder should charge the ball hard for the first 4 or 5 steps, then decrease his speed, get under control, and break down to field the ball.
- To field the ball, drop halfway down on the throwing side knee (the right knee for right handed players) and put the back of the glove flat on the ground between the legs.
- The outfielder should center his body in front of the ball, so he can block it with his torso if it takes a bad hop. Watch the ball into the glove, trap it with the throwing hand, then rise up and step into the throw. Use a crow-hop to get more momentum and power behind the throw into the infield.
- The third baseman will tell the shortstop whether to cut off the throw or let it through. If it's a good strong throw that's on target, he should let it through.
- If you have several multi-position players, have them switch lines after every player has had a turn, so they can run the drill from multiple positions

PITCHER OVERTHROWS PICKOFF MOVE. OUTFIELDER BACKS IT UP



OUTFIELDER THROWS TO 3<sup>RD</sup> WHILE PITCHER BACKS UP THROW



## Pitchers and Catchers - Blocking Low Pitches

### Setup

Place a line of players at the pitcher's mound, and have your catchers ready to rotate in and out of play at home plate.

### Execution

The pitcher will intentionally throw balls into the dirt and force the catcher to get down and block them. Work with the catcher on his technique, with the goal of keeping every ball in front of him.

### Coaching Tips

- Catchers must be in a stance that allows their first move to be down, rather than up when they begin to execute the block. The easiest way to accomplish this is to insure that their feet are far enough apart so their heel are in contact with the ground, toes are pointed up the baselines and their thighs are parallel to the ground.
- If they are in a deep crouch then their hips will have to go up before they can begin to move towards the ground. A deep crouch will only add to the amount of time it takes to block a ball by making the athlete travel upward before they are able to drive to the ground.
- Work on the following cues when teaching catchers to block balls in the dirt.
  1. Replace your feet with your knees in one, fluid motion: Drive your knees into the ground to where your feet were (about shoulder-width apart, with your upper body centered between them).
  2. Clear your feet: So that you can get to your knees easier, clear away your feet by sliding them out to the side of your body. Keep your shins on the ground and your toes pointed back and away from you to be in the best position to block the ball.
  3. Drop your mitt: As you see the ball approaching the dirt, drop your mitt between your legs. The web of your mitt should be in contact with the ground, and the palm of your glove should be squared towards the pitch. Your fingers will be below the ball.
  4. Tuck your arms: As you drop your glove, keep your throwing hand poised above the mitt or tight to your throwing-side. Your glove-side arm should be tight to your body, making a larger blocking area.
  5. Angle forward: Your upper body should be straightened and angled forward, over the ball. By doing this, you can knock down the ball and deflect it straight into the ground, rather than away from you.
  6. Keep your eyes down: Tuck your chin and always watch the ball.



# Pitchers and Catchers - Communicating on Passed Balls and Wild Pitches

## Setup

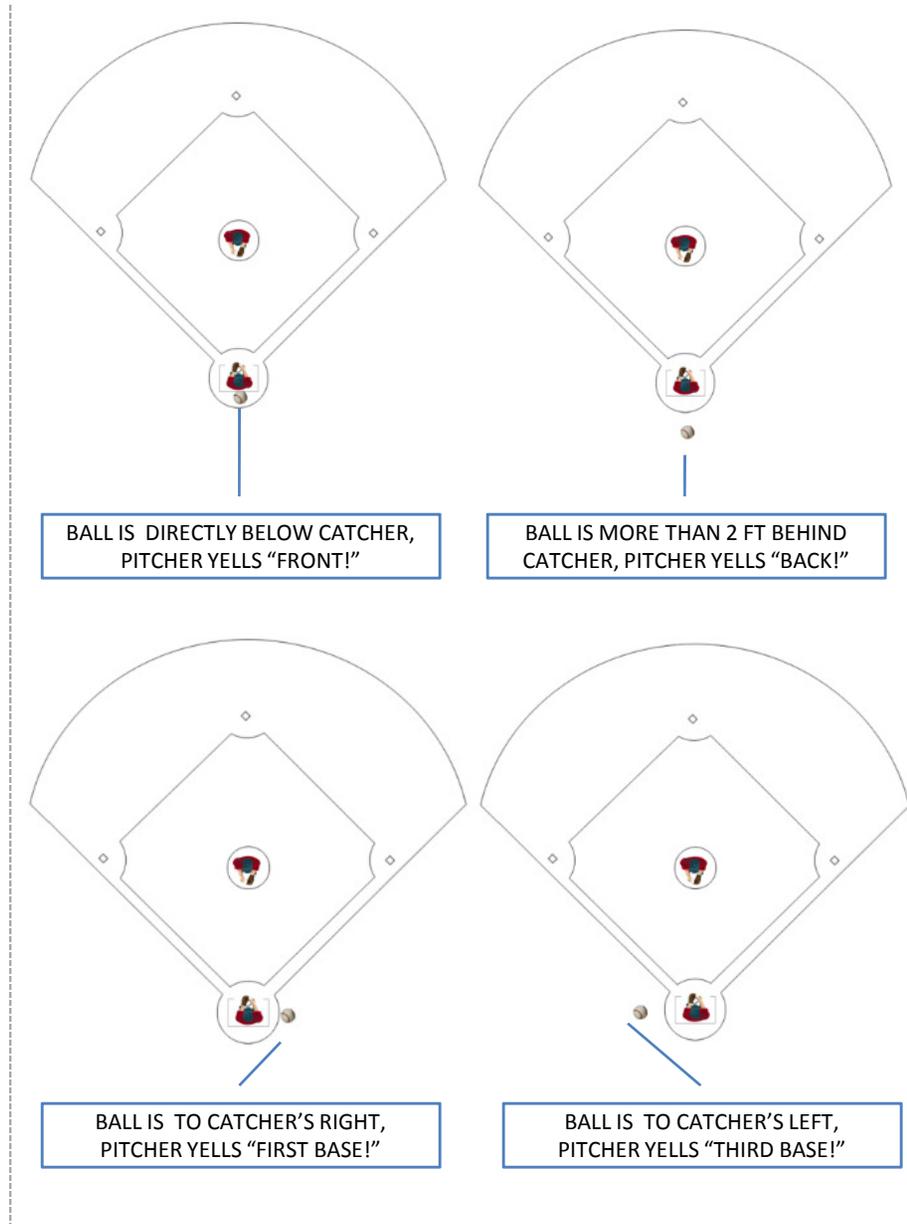
Place a line of players at the pitcher's mound, and have your catchers ready to rotate in and out of play at home plate.

## Execution

The pitcher will intentionally throw balls into the dirt and force the catcher to get down and block them. When the ball comes loose, the pitcher should call out to the catcher to tell him where to find the ball.

## Coaching Tips

- If the ball is directly below the catcher, or less than two feet behind him, the pitcher should shout "In Front! In Front." This allows the catcher to stand straight up or shuffle a step backwards in order to locate the ball.
- If the ball is more than two feet behind the catcher, the pitcher should shout "Back! Back!" This will require the catcher to turn around in order to locate the ball.
- If the ball has rolled to first base side of the infield, the pitcher will point to it and shout "First Base! First Base!"
- If the ball has rolled to third base side of the infield, the pitcher will point to it and shout "Third Base! Third Base!"
- The catcher should scoop the ball up with both the glove hand and bare hand, find his grip and be ready to make an accurate throw
- The pitcher should shout with urgency - this is a play where a split second of extra speed can stop a baserunner or prevent a run from scoring.



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