

# Ground Ball Technique

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Coaching the correct ground ball technique is a fundamental softball skill. If you have read some of the "Defensive Strategy" articles then you know one of the keys to winning fastpitch softball games is to make the easy outs. By coaching the correct fundamentals of fielding grounders, you will equip your players to turn more hit balls into easy outs and continue on the road to building a winning fastpitch softball team.

The basics of ground ball technique are:

- 1 Feet should be slightly more than shoulder width apart with the left foot slightly forward
- 2 The body should be squared up with the ball
- 3 Knees bent, keep the back straight
- 4 Glove on the ground in front of the feet
- 5 Throwing hand on top of the glove in a "shark" position



The actual fielding of the ball is a four-step process:

- 1 Receive the ball in the correct stance as outlined above.
- 2 The glove and throwing hand then come to the center of the body as the player begins to assume the throwing position.
- 3 The body is then turned to align the shoulders with the throwing target and the throwing arm comes to the cocked position, the players weight is transferred to her back foot.
- 4 The player then takes a short step and throws the ball.

The "Ready" position for all infielders, except 3<sup>rd</sup> base, is:

- 1 Feet slightly more than shoulder width part.
- 2 The feet should be in motion and the player should be creeping towards the hitter. A body in motion will react quicker than a body in a frozen set position.
- 3 Both palms should be open, fingertips pointing to the ground, and facing the hitter and should be just below knee level.
- 4 For 3<sup>rd</sup> base, steps 1 and 2 apply, however the hands should be positioned with her fingers pointing up and should be up around her shoulders. Since most 3<sup>rd</sup> basemen play up in Fastpitch Softball, she needs to be in a position to protect her head in case of a line drive.

## Footwork

While it's good to practice shuffling your feet from side to side, this technique only comes into play for a ground ball hit within one stride to either side of the player. Any balls hit more than one stride away, the player needs to use crossover steps. TURN and RUN. I make a point of this only because I've seen numerous players try to shuffle ten feet to get a ground ball. That's RIDICULOUS.

A ball hit more than a stride away, the player's first step should be to take their foot farthest away from the ball and crossover their body towards the ball. Most players will want to start their move with the foot already closest to the ball. This generally leaves them in a stretched out and stuck position. Utilize the crossover step to gain the most distance and be in a running or diving position.

## Quick Tips on Ground Ball Technique:

- For players that have a hard time using both hands to receive the ball, rather than telling them "two hands" we tell them to "shark it". The girls know what it means and it tends to resonate with them better.

- For practice on getting into the correct position, we practice Frog hops. Feet apart, knees bent, back straight, and hop straight up and back down. We will do this about 10 times in our warm up and stretching routine. This will help to build their leg muscles to be able to explode out of receiving the ball.
- For the player that pulls her head away from the ball we will back off of hitting hard grounders. Get about 10 feet from the player and roll balls to her and have her field the ball correctly and throw to a target or player. Take this a bit slow at first so she can really concentrate on keeping her head down. Then slowly increase the speed of the balls being fed to her. Generally, I have found jerking the head away is just a bad habit that can be overcome with safe repetition. If the player is genuinely afraid of being hit in the face, then have her wear a [game face](#) for protection.