

# PLAYING SHORTSTOP

The shortstop is usually the best fielder on the team. Having to cover from second base to deep in the hole behind third base means the shortstop must have quick feet and a strong arm. Shortstops are the leaders of the defense. They must take charge of the infield and be responsible for how it plays.

Play behind the baseline, about a third to halfway to third base. You must be able to reach ground balls in the hole to the left of the third baseman, and balls hit up the middle behind second base. Positioning and a quick first step are especially important for a shortstop.

## *BUNT COVERAGE*

When there's a man on first and no outs, the other team may bunt. In a bunt situation the shortstop almost always covers second base.

As the batter squares around to bunt, run over and cover second base.

Whoever fields the bunt will try to get the lead runner at second base. Make a big target with your glove and, if the throw can beat the runner, call loudly for the ball. Be ready to step on the bag for the force-out, then take one step toward the infield to get out of the sliding runner's way before throwing to the second baseman covering first for the double play. This action is the same as the inside-feed pivot described in the "Turning the Double Play" section below.

If there are runners on first and second and a bunt is likely, your coach may put on a "rotation play," in which the third baseman charges the bunt and the shortstop covers third. The rotation play is difficult to execute, but can very effectively foil the bunt. If your team is going to use the rotation play, your coach will drill you on it beforehand. Don't try it in a game unless you've successfully worked it in practice.

## *POP-UPS*

On pop-ups, the shortstop catches anything hit from the pitcher's mound, out into left and left center field. On fly balls to the outfield, go after them, but listen for an outfielder calling you off. If the outfielder call "I got it" run off to your right, away from the ball. You should also catch pop-ups behind third base, all the way into foul territory.

## *THE CUTOFF*

The shortstop is the relay man on throws to third base from center and left fields, on throws to home from center field, and on throws to second base from left field.

If the ball is hit to the outfield, line up right between the ball and the base to which the outfielder is going to throw it. Keep your hands high over your head and make a big target for the outfielder.

As the ball is thrown, point your throwing shoulder toward the fielder. Catch the ball with both hands in front of you throwing shoulder so you can make a quick throw to whichever base the second or third baseman tells you. A well-executed relay's two



## TURNING THE DOUBLE PLAY

When there's a runner on first and less than two outs you must be ready to turn the double play on a ground ball. If the ball is hit to you, your job will be to feed the ball to the second baseman, who will make the pivot at second base. If the ball is hit to the right side of the infield it will be your job to step on the base and throw to first. There are a number of different ways to execute each, depending on the situation.

### THE FEED

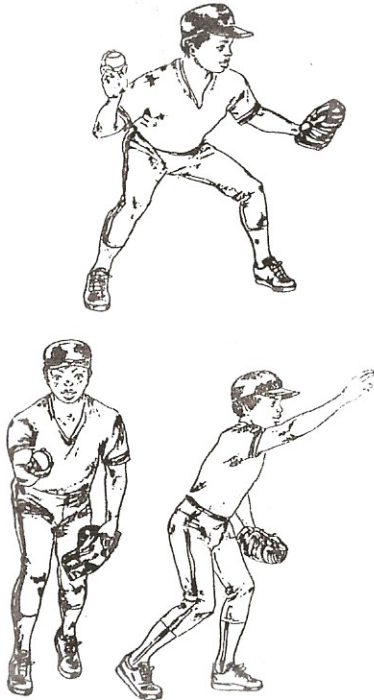
Because shortstops are generally right-handed they have an easier time feeding the ball than do second basemen. Most of the time you will use the regular feed.

After you field the ball get it in the proper grip. Keep your back low as you take a short step back with your left foot. Get your glove out of the way so the second baseman can see the ball, and throw it sidearm to second base.

On balls hit up the middle, field the ball and take it out of the glove so the second baseman can see it.

Toss it underhand firmly toward the base, about chest high. Follow through by moving toward second base, but don't get in the way. If you don't follow through it's much more likely you'll make a bad throw and all runners will be safe.

On all feeds you want to lead the second baseman with the throw by tossing the ball chest-high right at the base. If the feed is good the second baseman will catch the ball while stepping on the base and be in good position to make the pivot.



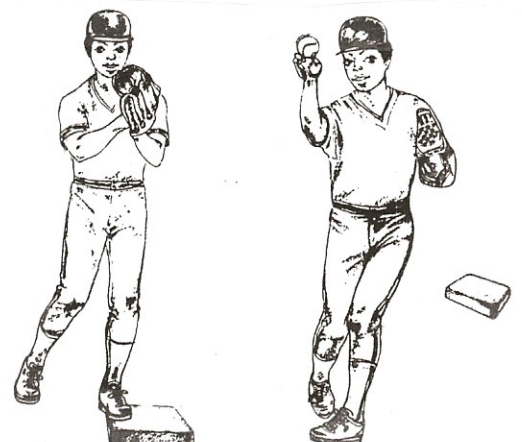
### THE PIVOT

The shortstop makes the pivot on ground balls hit to the first or second baseman, the pitcher, or the catcher. You'll have to make the pivot on balls thrown from the infield side (the inside feed) and the outfield side (the outside feed) of second base.

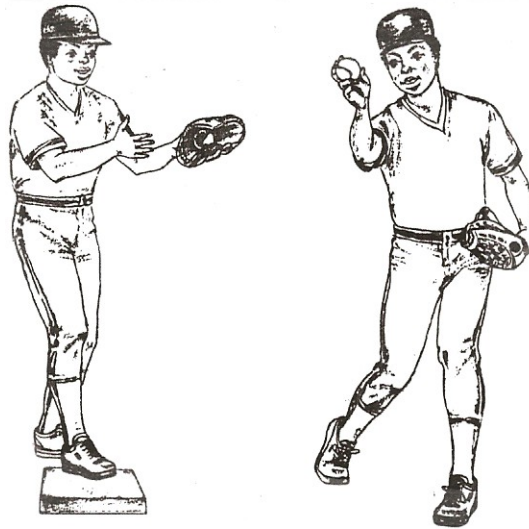
When the feed is being made from inside the baseline, yell, "Inside feed!" Take some stutter steps before you reach the base to time your catch.

Step on the inside corner of the bag with your left foot as you catch the ball.

Take one step to your right, turn your body so your shoulder faces first base, plant your right foot, and make a strong overhand throw.



If the ground ball is fielded behind the baseline, deep in the infield, you'll want to make the same play on the outfield side of the base. Yell, "Outside feed!" Take some stutter steps before you reach the base to time your catch.



Step on the outside corner of the bag with your right foot as you catch the ball.

Step with your left foot, turn your shoulder toward first base and make a strong overhand throw. As you complete your throw, you may have to hop up in the air and out of the way of the sliding runner.

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