

LESSON 4: FIELDING FLY BALLS

Grade-Level Outcomes

Primary Outcomes

Catching: Catches, with a mature pattern, from different trajectories using a variety of objects in small-sided game play. (S1.M21.7)

Reducing space: Reduces open spaces in the field by working with teammates to maximize coverage. (S2.M11.8)

Embedded Outcome

Rules & etiquette: Demonstrates knowledge of rules and etiquette by self-officiating modified physical activities and games or following parameters to create or modify a game. (S4.M6.7)

Lesson Objectives

The learner will:

- demonstrate proper ground-ball fielding technique using all critical elements of a mature pattern during small-group fielding practice tasks and game application.
- demonstrate proper fly-ball fielding technique using all critical elements of a mature pattern during small-group fielding practice tasks and game application.
- work with teammates by calling for fly balls in the game application of over the line.

Equipment and Materials

- Ball options: tennis balls, Wiffle balls, racquetballs, foam balls, etc.; 5 balls for each group of 3 students
- Pails, buckets, or bags for the balls
- Bat options: Wiffle bats of different sizes, tennis rackets, wooden paddles
- Four-base grid options: bases spray-painted on grass, rubber bases, poly spots, cones
- Cones for over the line: 4 cones for each game setup
- Pedometers

Introduction

Begin with a review of fielding ground balls. Check for understanding on fielding a ball that doesn't come right at you. Demonstrate the technique two times, one done correctly and one incorrectly. Ask students which one was correct and why. Follow up with "why" questions about the technique (e.g., Why is it important to get behind the ball? How should your feet move if the ball is within one or two steps? How should your feet move if the ball is farther away?). Provide step-count goal for groups of three.

Instructional Task: Review Fielding Ground Balls

■ PRACTICE TASK

Field and throw:

In a grid formation (four bases), with one student at each of three bases in the grid; one student as the thrower, one as the fielder, and one as the receiver. Begin with five balls of choice.

First: The thrower throws a ground ball to the fielder, who fields the ball and throws through the grid to the receiver. The receiver drops the caught ball on the ground beside him. Continue with all five balls. Then, the receiver becomes the thrower, the thrower becomes the fielder, and the fielder moves to the open base and becomes the receiver. Repeat the process with the

five balls. After the third rotation, all three students will have fielded at least five ground balls and thrown them to a catcher.

Second: Have the thrower alternate throwing the ball to opposite sides of the fielder. The fielder must move to get behind the ball to field it cleanly and then throw to the catcher. Use the same rotation system so that each player has five opportunities to field a ground ball.

Third: With the same setup, repetitions, and rotation, the thrower throws the ball in the general direction of the fielder, so that the fielder has to move to field the ball.

Use small pails, buckets, or bags to carry the sets of five balls for groups of students.

If class size or lack of equipment dictates larger groups, have students back up the fielder, back up the catcher, or feed balls to the thrower. Students who are backing up another student should be at a safe distance (5 to 10 feet; 1.5 to 3 m). They then rotate into the drill.

Extension

Partners use technology to record peers' fielding technique for ground balls. Provide a teacher-generated checklist with the critical elements.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Groups should choose the type of balls they want to use in the fielding activities.
- Groups may determine the distance apart they want to be.
- Groups may determine the speed at which the balls are thrown during the practice tasks.
- Groups may determine whether the ball is hit fungo-style rather than thrown.

What to Look For

Critical elements for fielding ground balls:

1. Assume a low ready position, with feet apart.
2. Both hands are out in front, with palms up.
3. "Alligator" the ball and absorb it into the body.
4. Crow-hop and transfer into throwing position.
5. Is the force or speed of the throws or tosses appropriate for the skill of the receiver?
6. Are students looking to see that the receiver is ready before throwing?

Instructional Task: Fielding Fly Balls

■ PRACTICE TASK

Demonstrate technique for fielding fly balls. Remind students that the technique is similar to catching a thrown ball. Review by having two or three students explain and demonstrate a critical element that they chose to "remove" from catching and what would happen with that element missing from the skill. Demonstrate the proper footwork for catching fly balls in all directions:

- Front: jab step
- Sides: crossover step
- Behind: drop step

Shadow Drill

Stand in front of the class with a ball in one hand. Students are scattered in personal space. Hold the ball in the air, moving it either to one side, back overhead, or out in front at an angle. Students respond by moving in that direction, using proper footwork (jab, crossover, or drop step). Continue to move the group up, back, and to the sides.

Make sure that students have enough personal space so that if someone makes an inaccurate movement, she will not run into another student.

Catch and Throw

Use the same organization and implementation as in the earlier field and throw practice task.

First: The thrower throws fly balls directly to the fielder.

Second: The thrower throws fly balls alternately to both sides, making the fielder take two or three steps to the side to catch the ball.

Third: The thrower throws fly balls alternately in front of the fielder and then behind the fielder.

Fourth: The thrower may throw fly balls in any direction near the fielder.

Partner Catching

Using the same grids and groups of three as in the previous fielding tasks, two students are fielders and one student is a thrower. Identify which fielder has priority. The thrower throws a fly ball between the two fielders to practice calling for the ball. The caught ball is tossed back to the thrower. Repeat for five throws and rotate positions.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Groups should choose the type of balls that they want to use in the fielding activities.
- Groups may determine how far apart they want to be.
- Groups may determine the difficulty of the fly balls that are thrown.

What to Look For

Critical elements for fielding fly balls (similar to catching from Lesson 1):

1. Assume an athletic stance, with non-throwing-side foot slightly ahead.
2. Call for the ball.
3. Both hands are ready for a two-hand catch: “When it’s high, thumbs will meet; pinkies touch when it’s at your feet.”
4. Absorb the ball into the body.
5. Crow-hop and throw: “Thumb to the thigh and up to the sky” (big arm circle).

Critical elements for jab steps (balls hit in front of the player):

1. Take a quick and short step toward the ball to start momentum.
2. Run hard for the ball, pumping both arms.

Critical elements for crossover steps (balls hit to the side):

1. Pivot the foot on the ball side.
2. Cross over with the foot on the non-ball side.
3. Run hard to the ball.
4. Square up to the fly ball, and get in ready position to make the catch.

Critical elements for drop steps (balls hit behind the player):

1. Step backward at an angle, with the foot on the ball side.
2. Turn body and run, pumping both arms.
3. Square up to the fly ball if possible, and get in ready position to make the catch.

Critical elements for fly ball communication:

1. Determine specific words to call for the ball (e.g., “mine” or “I got it”).
2. Determine fielding priorities:
 - Outfielders have priority over infielders.
 - Center fielder has priority over all others.
 - Shortstop has priority over all infielders.
 - Force or speed of fielders’ throws or tosses are appropriate for the skill of the receiver.

- Students look to see that the receiver is ready before throwing.
- Fielders call for the fly ball in the practice task.

Instructional Task:

Game Application of Fielding Fly Balls and Ground Balls

■ PRACTICE TASK

Over the line:

Set up playing areas so that they radiate out from a central open space. Have three players per team: one thrower acting as a hitter, and two fielders.

Thrower throws from home plate area.

Mark a line with two cones that fielders must stay behind (20 to 30 feet [6 to 9 m] from home).

Mark sidelines with two more cones that make an alley to play within (30 to 50 feet [9 to 15 m] wide).

Hits: ball thrown into the alley past the line on the fly without being caught; any ball dropped by the fielders; fielders cross “the line” when catching the ball

Outs: two foul balls by the thrower (outside the alley); fly balls caught in the air

Runs: three “hits” in an inning scores one run; each additional “hit” in that inning scores another run

Players rotate after three outs.

Refinements

- Defense: Spread out to cover all types and distances of hits. Fielder farthest away from home has priority on fly balls.
- Offense: Use a high crow hop to throw for more distance.

EMBEDDED OUTCOME: S4.M6.7. Students should understand and follow the rules so that they can self-officiate a small-sided game.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Adjust the scoring, the number of outs, or both.
- Students determine the distance between home and the line, along with size of the alley.
- Groups choose the type of ball used.

What to Look For

Critical elements for defense:

1. Players use correct fielding technique for ground balls.
2. Players use correct fielding technique for fly balls.
3. Fielders call for fly balls.
4. Defensive players cooperate to catch fly balls.
5. Players count outs accurately.

Critical elements for offense:

1. Players place hits strategically into the alley between fielders.
 2. Players count runs accurately.
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Formal and Informal Assessments

- Checks for understanding: fielding technique for ground balls (formal peer assessment) and fly balls (informal)
- Exit slip: Describe the proper communication and who has priority for fly balls in Wiffle ball.

Closure

If students are primarily at the pre-control and control levels in fielding skills, use questions such as:

- What are some things to remember about fielding a ground ball?
- Why are those things important?
- Show me how you make a triangle when fielding a ground ball.
- How should your feet be positioned when catching a fly ball?
- Why is it important to call for the ball when catching a fly ball?

If students are primarily at the utilization and proficient levels of GLSP (Graham, Holt/Hale, & Parker, 2012) in fielding skills, ask questions such as:

- Can someone show me the difference between the throwing-arm motion when you are close to a target and when you are farther away?
- If you were using a glove, how would you try to field a ball that is on your throwing side?
- When you were playing over the line, how did you position yourselves when on defense?
- Why did you try that strategy? Did it work?

Reflection

- Are students able to use their fielding skills in modified game play?
- Are students working together when playing defense?
- Are students ready to move on to a new skill?

Homework

Ask students to update their physical activity logs.
Collect part or whole homework from Lesson 2.

Resources

- Graham, G. (2008). *Teaching children physical education: Becoming a master teacher*. 3rd ed. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Graham, G., Holt/Hale, S.A., & Parker, M. (2012). *Children moving: A reflective approach to teaching physical education*. 9th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Old Mission Beach Athletic Club. (2015). Official over the line rules. Retrieved from www.ombac.org.
Internet keyword search: "fly ball priority"