



## FIELDING A GROUND BALL

While hand-eye coordination is not as crucial in fielding a ground ball, *fear of the ball* is a big problem. Most kids are scared to death of getting hit by a ball that is bouncing sharply, heading directly toward them. Softballs are not soft and they can hurt young (and old) kids.

The best thing you can do to improve your players' ability to field ground balls is to remove their fear of the ball by using softer, safety balls. If you are the type of coach who thinks kids just need to take a few grounders off the face until they learn to "stay down on the ball and keep your body behind it", you are in for a surprise – those days are over. Kids have many choices now as to what sport they want to play and it doesn't take much – fear, injury, boredom – before they choose to play something else. So be compassionate and use safety balls when teaching your players how to field ground balls.

### BASICS for Fielding a grounder:

1. **Athletic Ready Position: Knees slightly bent, weight on the balls of the feet**, with balance slightly forward. The shoulders, hips and feet are square to the ball. Bend at the knees, not at the waist, to lower the body into good fielding position.
2. Let the **arms hang in a relaxed position, fingers down**. Hands start in "neutral" position – **approximately waist high, thumbs up, palms facing each other**.
3. **Approach the ball like an airplane**. Try to get your players to imagine that they are airplanes coming in for a landing when they approach a ground ball. This will help them get lower to the ground the closer the ball gets to them, instead of approaching the ball like a helicopter and plopping down on top of it at the last minute. If they approach it like a helicopter they will either miss the ball completely or field it behind them.
4. **Just prior to gathering the ball** into the glove (*note: just prior to*), make sure the **tips of the glove are touching the ground** (you never want to have to go down for the ball at the last minute – it's quicker to have the glove close to the ground in anticipation of fielding the ball).
5. Field the ball with **hands in front of the body, palms facing the ball**, elbows in front of the knees, elbows slightly bent. Field the ball on the glove hand side of the ball.
6. Gather the ball using "**soft**" hands. **Field the ball with your hands, not with your glove**.
7. Gather the ball **through the middle of your body to the throwing side** as you move your feet to a throwing position, **stepping toward the target**.

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