

Team Defense

Defense – Bunts

- ✓ Eighty percent of the time, standard bunt defense calls for the first and third basemen, along with the pitcher, to charge the ball, while the second baseman covers first.
- ✓ In the “wheel” defense with runners at first and second, the same players charge the ball, but the shortstop - after he “drives” the runner on second back to the bag with an aggressive jab step - then races to cover third. The second baseman covers second. The ball is thrown to third unless the fielder is certain the runner will be safe.

Defense – Runners on First & Third – Steal of Second Base

- ✓ With runners on first and third, there are three basic defensive strategies should a steal of second be attempted:
 1. First, the catcher can try to throw out the runner heading for second base.
 2. Second, the pitcher, shortstop or second baseman can cut off a throw to second in front of the bag and relay it to the catcher to put out a runner trying to steal home. This strategy calls for coordination among the infielders, and must be practiced. The plays must be signaled before the pitch; one version has the pitcher cutting off the throw to second and either throwing home, to third, or engaging the runner on third in a rundown. Another has the pitcher faking the catch and either the shortstop or the second baseman catching the ball about 15 feet in front of second base and throwing home.
 3. The third alternative is to have both cutoffs fake the catch (key on whether the runner on third breaks for the plate) and let the ball go through to second base. Finally, the catcher can fake the throw to second base and throw directly to third to attempt to pick off the runner, or engage the runner in a rundown.

Defense – Bases Loaded or Runners at First and Third With Less Than Two Outs

- ✓ When the bases are loaded or runners are at first and third with less than two outs, infielders should be placed in a “split” position, with the first and third basemen playing in and the middle infielders at double-play depth.
- ✓ Other situations that should be practiced include do-or-die plays, holding runners on base, picking off runners, rundowns, balks, a “wheel” with a pickoff, first and third defense, outfield positioning, and relays.
(Tom Emanski, <http://members.aol.com/baseparent/defense.html>, Skip Bertman, [Coaching and Playing](#))

Cutoffs –

Executing cutoffs properly is a crucial but overlooked part of baseball.

- ✓ The cutoff man goes out until the outfielder fields the ball, aligning himself between the outfielder and the base being thrown to.
- ✓ He stands with his arms in the air to make himself a bigger target.
- ✓ As the throw comes in, he turns to align himself with the flight of the ball, positioning himself to keep the ball on the glove side.
- ✓ He tries to catch the ball chest high or above to speed his release.
- ✓ Once he gets the ball he takes a quick cross step to trigger his throw to the base.
- ✓ While the cutoff man has to execute on the throw itself, all players should understand their positional responsibilities on cutoffs plays, for each player has a specific place to be and a task to be ready to perform.
- ✓ Cutoffs can keep teams out of big innings by keeping runners on first base or even grabbing an unexpected out on the base paths.

Situational Defense – Seven Basic Cutoff Scenarios

1. *No one on base, single to the outfield*

- catcher – trails the runner to first base
- pitcher – backs up throw to second base
- first base – sneaks in behind the runner at first base
- second base – takes throw at second base from left, serves as cut from center and right
- third base – backs up second base on throws from center and right
- shortstop – takes throw at second base on throws from center and right, serves as cut from left
- left field – moves to shortstop to back up throws from center and right
- center field – backs up left and right on singles
- right field – backs up second base on throws from left, backs up center on single

2. *Man on first base, single to the outfield*

- catcher – stays at home, but backs up throws to third base from left before returning to the plate
- pitcher – backs up third base
- first base – sneaks in behind the runner at first base
- second base – takes throw at second base from outfield
- third base – takes throws at third base, calls cuts to third
- shortstop – serves as cut from outfield
- left field – moves to back up throws to third base from center and right
- center field – backs up left and right on singles
- right field – backs up second base on throws from left, backs up center on single

3. *Man on second base, single to the outfield*

- catcher – stays at home plate, calls cuts to home
- pitcher – backs up home plate
- first base – sneaks in behind the runner at first base on singles to left; serves as cut to home on singles to center and right
- second base – takes throw at second base on singles to left; sneaks behind the runner at first on singles to center and right
- third base – takes throws at third base on singles to center and right; serves as cut to home on single to left
- shortstop – takes throws to third base on singles to left; serves as cut to third on singles to center and right
- left field – moves to back up throws to third base from center and right
- center field – backs up left and right on singles
- right field – backs up second base on throws from left, backs up center on single

4. *Men on first and second base, single to the outfield*

- catcher – stays at home plate; calls cuts on throws home
- pitcher – backs up throws to third base and home
- first base – sneaks in behind the runner at first base on singles to left; serves as cut to home on singles to center and right
- second base – takes throw at second base from outfield
- third base – takes throws at third base on singles to center and right; serves as cut to home on single to left; calls cuts on throws to third
- shortstop – takes throws to third base on singles to left; serves as cut to third on singles to center and right
- left field – moves to back up throws to third base from center and right
- center field – backs up left and right on singles, calls base to throw to
- right field – backs up second base on throws from left, backs up center on single

Team 3 – Team Defense

5. *Empty bases, extra base hit*

catcher – stays at home plate, calls cuts on throws home
pitcher – backs up throws to third base
first base – sneaks in behind the runner at second base to prevent wide turns
second base – takes lead cut position on throws to third base from right center; takes call position (15' behind shortstop) on throws from left center
third base – takes throws at third base on singles to center and right; serves as cut to home on single to left
shortstop – takes lead cut position on throws to third base from left center; takes call position (15' behind second baseman) on throws to third base from right center
left field – moves to back up throws to third base from center and right
center field – backs up left and right
right field – backs up second base on throws from left, backs up center

6. *Man on first base, extra base hit*

catcher – stays at home plate, calls cuts on throws to home
pitcher – backs up throws to third base and home plate
first base – serves as cut to home on relays from left center and right center
second base – takes lead cut position on throws to third base and home plate from right center; takes call position (15' behind shortstop) on throws to third base and home plate from left center
third base – takes throws at third base on singles to center and right; serves as cut to home on single to left
shortstop – takes lead cut position on throws to third base and home plate from left center; takes call position (15' behind shortstop) on throws to third base and home plate from right center
left field – moves to back up throws to third base from center and right
center field – backs up left and right
right field – backs up second base on throws from left, backs up center

7. *Man on third base, fly ball*

catcher – stays at home plate, calls cuts
pitcher – backs up throws home plate
first base – serves as cut to home on throws from left center and right center
second base – covers second base on balls to left; covers first on balls to center and right
third base – covers third base on balls to center and right; serves as cut to home on balls to left
shortstop – covers third base on balls to left; covers second base on balls to center and right
left field – moves to back up third base on balls to center and right
center field – backs up left and right
right field – backs up second base on balls to left, backs up center

NOTE: Much of the skills section (2A-2C) is drawn from Baseball Skills & Drills, American Baseball Coaches Association.