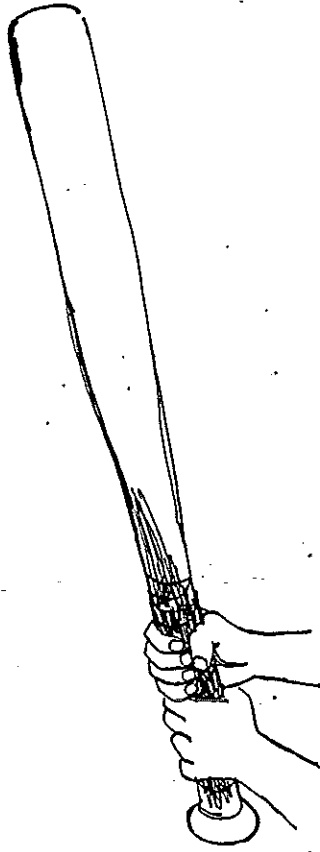


Getting Ready to Hit

You already know how to get ready to hit. This is just a check list in case you forget something.

If you are right-handed, grip the bat with your right hand over your left hand, about one inch above the knob. Like this:
Hold the bat over your right shoulder.



If you are left-handed, grip the bat with your left hand over your right hand.
Hold the bat over your left shoulder.

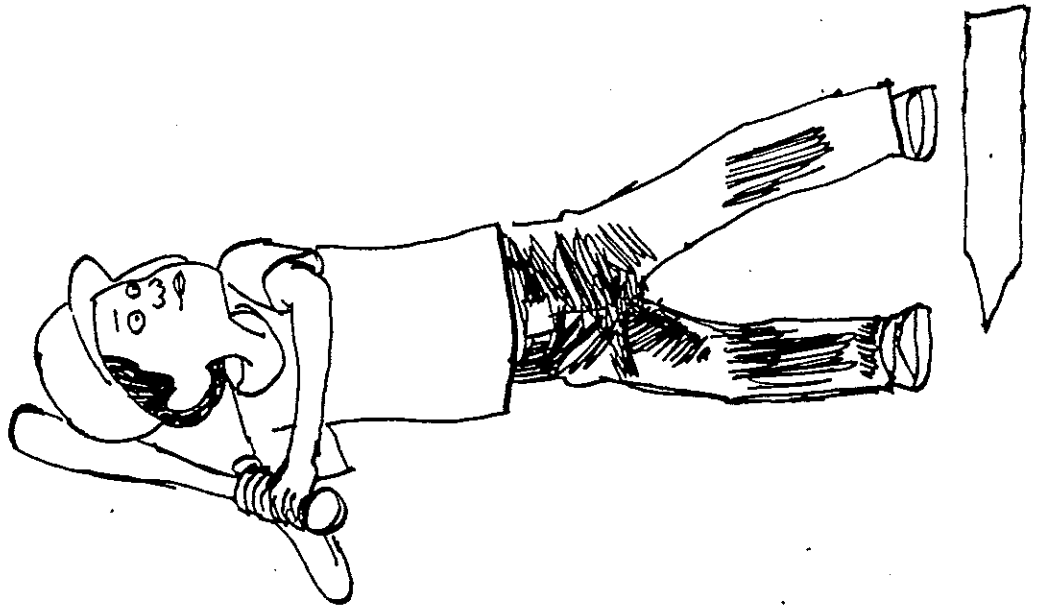
Face the side of the plate.

Place your feet about one foot apart.

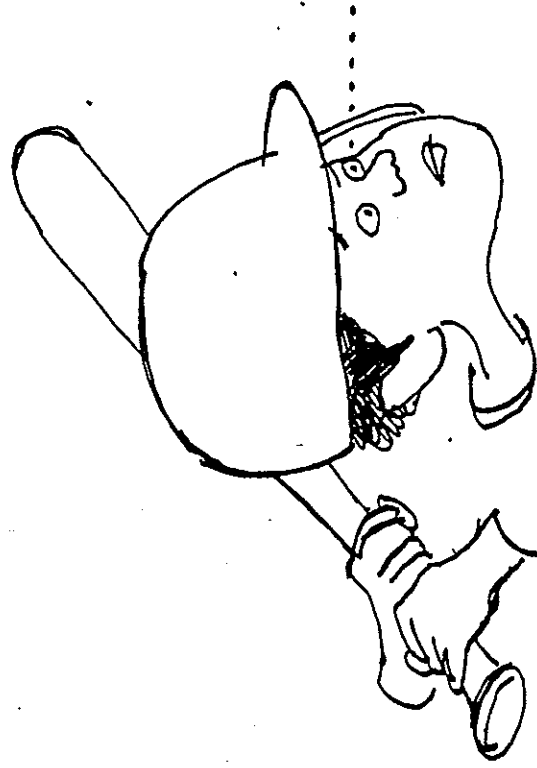
Bend your knees.

Point your front shoulder at the pitcher.

Shift most of your weight to your back foot.



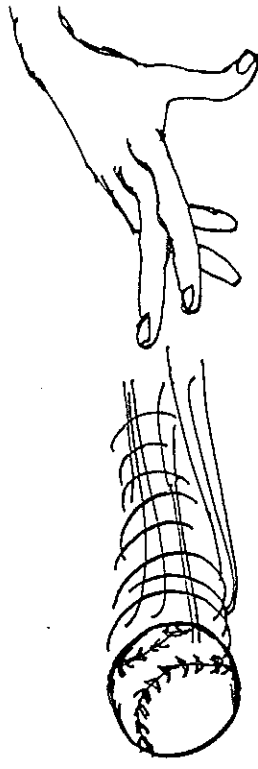
Keep your elbows away from your body.
Keep the bat off your shoulder.
Turn your face to the pitcher
so that you can watch him
with both eyes.



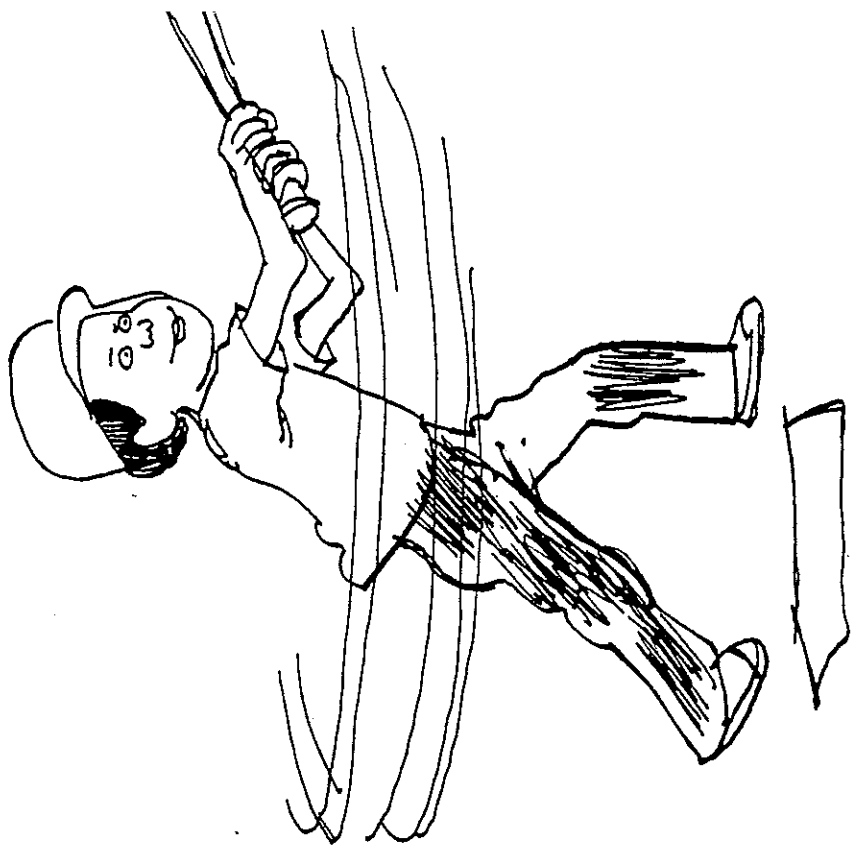
Watch the pitcher. Watch the pitcher.
Watch the pitcher.
You are now ready to hit.

How to Hit

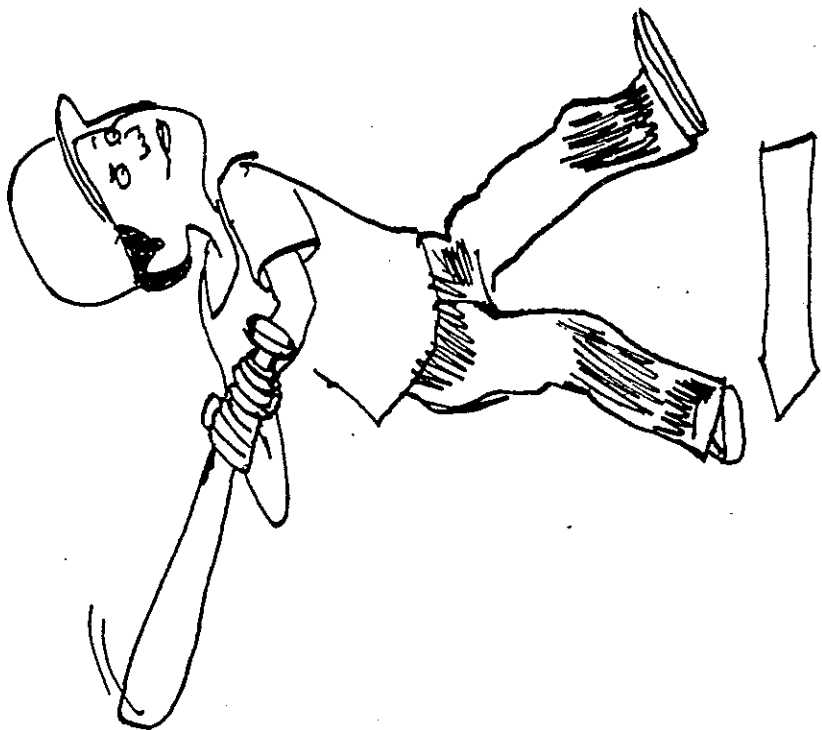
You already know how to hit.
But you may miss more than you'd like.
Here is what to keep in mind.



Watch the pitcher. When the pitcher
throws the ball, watch the ball.
See if you can watch the ball
all the way to the bat.
Keep your eyes open,
even if you are scared.



Swing the bat as if you are throwing the fat part of the bat right at the pitcher's chest. (But don't let go.) That will keep your swing level.

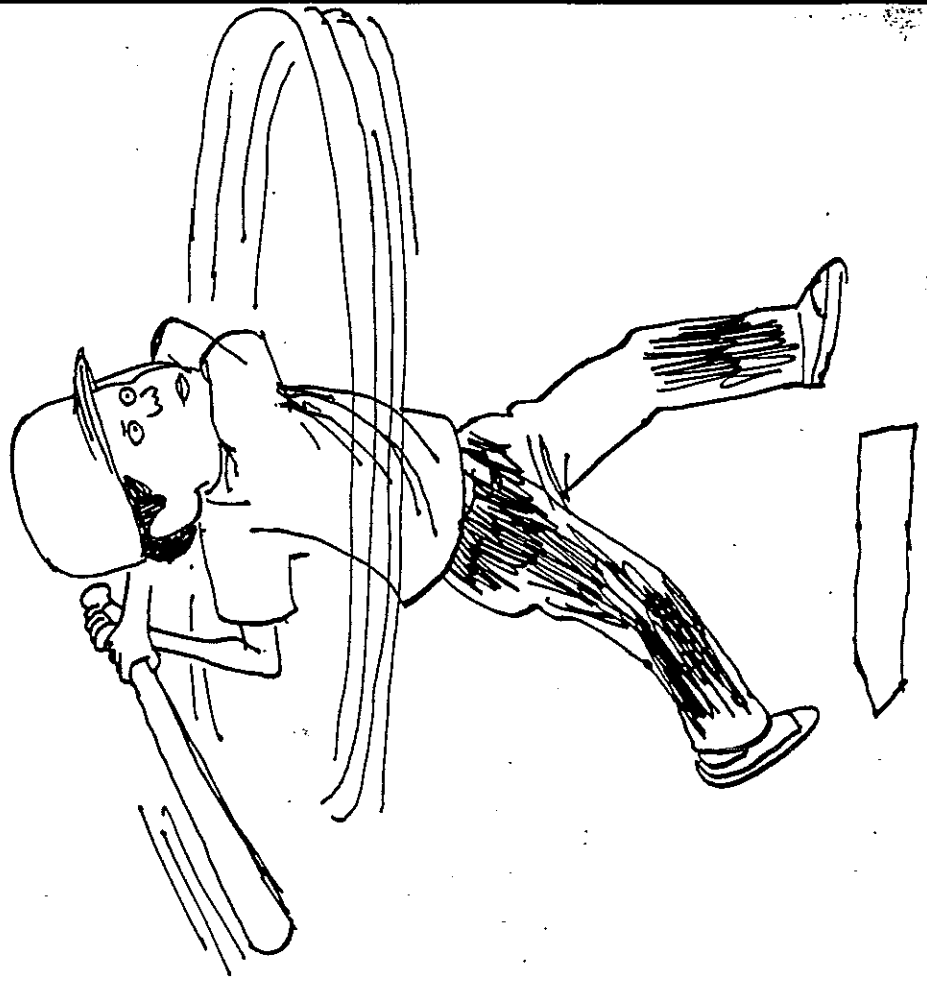


When you swing, keep your back foot in place. Step with your front foot right at the pitcher. Turn your hips toward the pitcher as you swing.

Swing all the way around,
even if you miss the ball.

This is called "follow-through."

You get power and distance
from follow-through.



Common Mistakes and How to Fix Them

Here are some mistakes many kids make.

They swing too slowly. They swing
after the ball has already passed them.

They should choke up on the bat.

That means, move their hands

four or five inches above the knob.

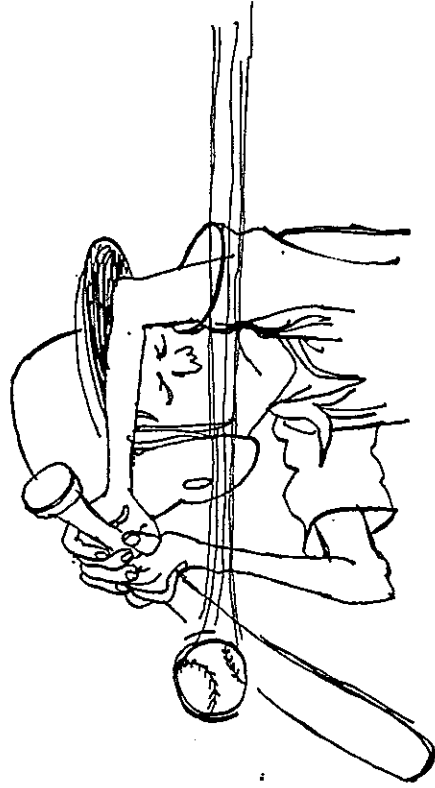
If they are still swinging too late,
they should get ready

by pointing the bat right at the catcher.

This will shorten the swing.

If they are swinging too high, they
should try to swing lower next time.

If they are swinging high one time,
and low the next time,
and just missing all the time,
they are probably closing their eyes.

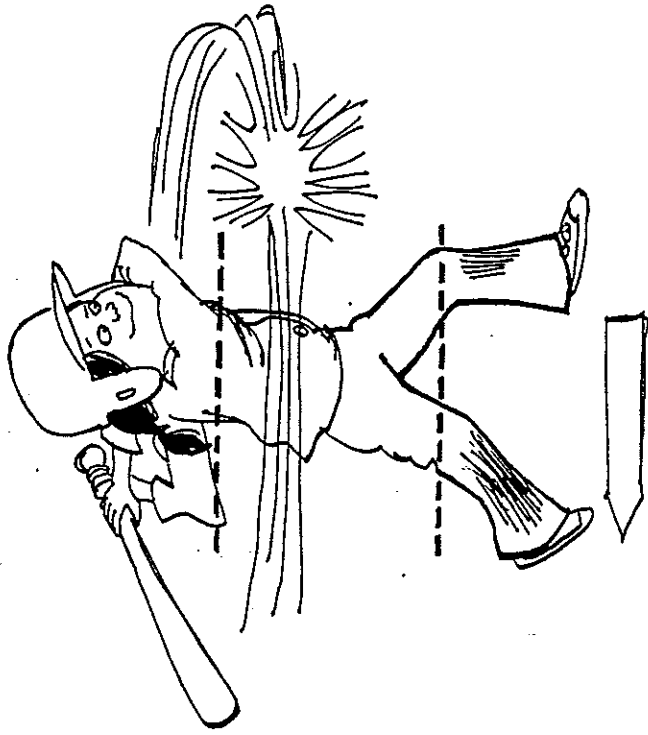


It is okay to be afraid.
Even major league players are afraid
of getting hit by the pitch.
But closing their eyes won't help.
If they get hit by the ball
it will still hurt (a little).
But they have to watch the ball.

The "Dos" and "Don'ts" of Hitting

- Do get ready before you swing.
- That means, get your hands right,
your feet right, your body right,
and watch the pitcher.
- Do get the bat on the ball.
- Nothing else really matters.
- Do step and swing with one motion.
- With a lot of practice,
you will find that this motion
of your whole body together
is easy and natural.
- Do swing level.
- Do follow through.
- Don't swing too hard.
- Don't close your eyes.
- Don't step "in the bucket."
- Step right toward the pitcher.

Don't swing at bad pitches.
Nobody hits bad pitches very well.
A good pitch is one that is
over the plate, between your arm pits
and your knees.



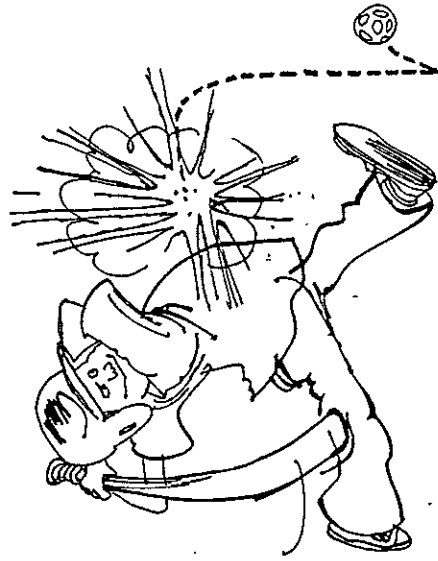
Don't swing your head when you
swing the bat. Keep watching the ball.
Don't get down on yourself.
Hitting well is very hard.
It takes a lot of practice.

How to Practice Hitting

Everybody needs to practice.
Even good hitters need to practice.

Have a pitcher throw to you.
Mom, dad, sister, brother, or
a friend would be just fine.
Wear your batting helmet.
Have them pitch easy at first.

To practice by yourself,
get a plastic ball with holes.
Throw the ball up and hit it.
The ball won't go very far
because of the holes,
so you won't have far to chase it.



How to Field Ground Balls

Of course you already know that when fielding a ground ball you run to get your body directly behind the ball.

You do not field a ground ball to the side unless you have to.

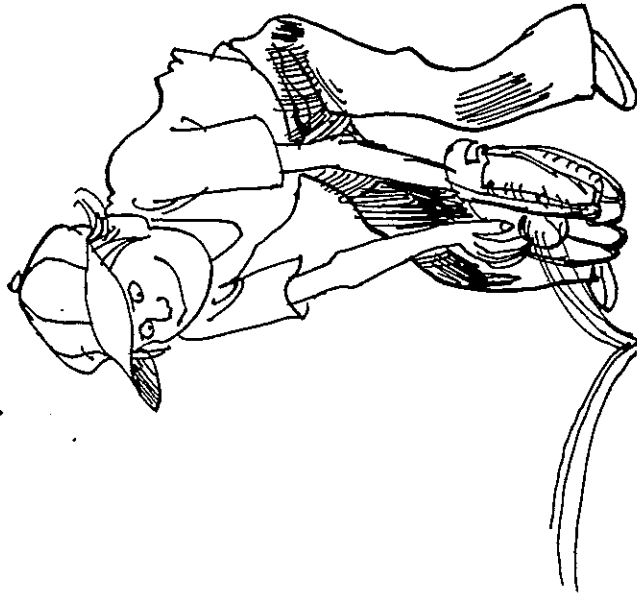
Keep your glove open, facing the ball, and low. Keep your head down.

Use both hands. Watch the ball all the way into your glove.

If you have time, move in on the ground ball. Don't wait for the ball to reach you. Move in and meet it.

This is called "charging the ball."

Infielders always charge when they can.



Expect bad bounces. Be ready for them.

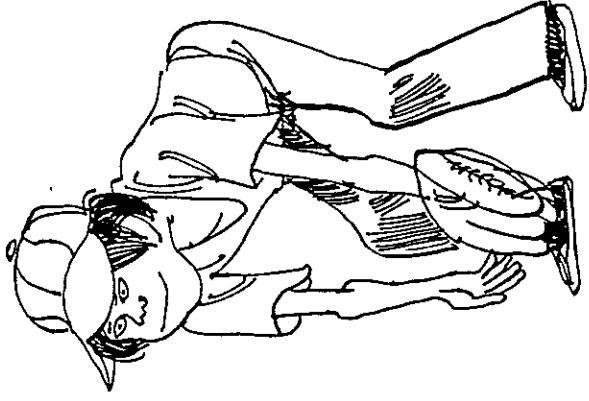
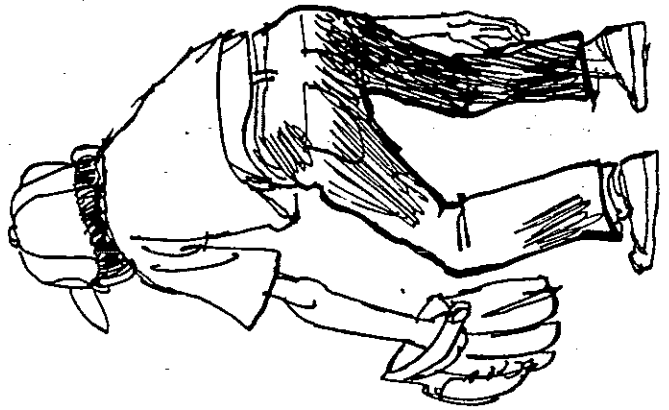
You will probably never play

on a field that isn't filled with

stones and holes.

Baseballs are almost never hit right at the fielder. The fielder almost always has to move in or out, left or right.

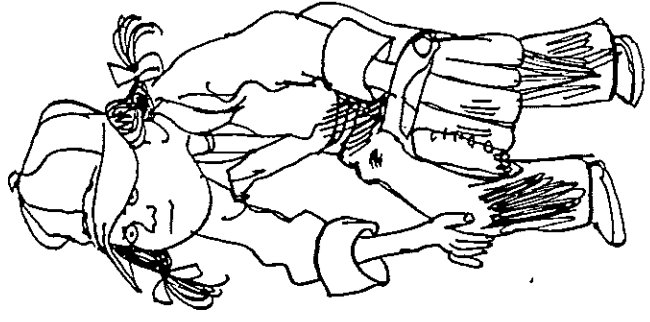
As you know, the best way to be ready is to face the batter. Stand with your feet apart, as far apart as the width of your shoulders. Bend your knees. Lean forward a bit.



If you are playing infield, hold your hands loosely in front of you, near the ground. Keep your glove open, facing the batter.

If you are playing outfield, rest your hands loosely on your knees.

Be alert. Watch the hitter. Watch the ball.

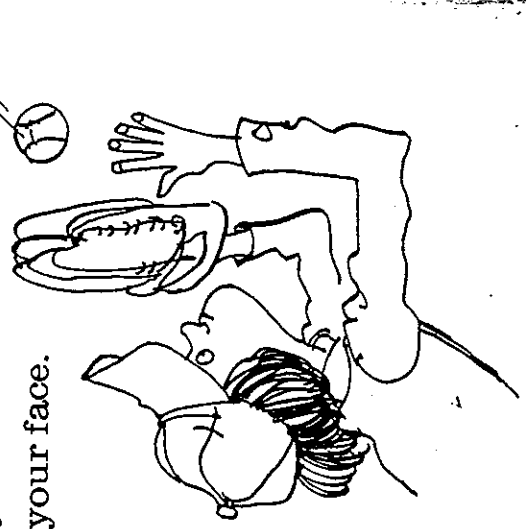


How to Field Fly Balls

Sure you already know how to field fly balls. But here are some reminders. Run as fast as you can to where you think the ball will land. Then wait for it.

If you have to, you can then move in a little, or over a little. Get behind the ball if you can. It is easier to move in than move out.

Line the ball up on your nose. Catch it in front of your face. Use two hands.



If the ball is hit behind you, turn around, run back, turn around again, and catch it in front of you. Don't pedal backwards. Nobody can run fast that way.

Watch the ball all the time it is in the air. Even when you turn around to run, watch the ball over your shoulder.

Common Mistakes and How to Fix Them

Here are a few common mistakes some players make.

If ground balls are getting through, they are probably bouncing under the glove.

The players are probably lifting their heads before they have the ball, too.

They should keep their gloves low, even on the ground sometimes.

They must watch the ball all the way into the glove.

Like hitting, it's okay to be afraid, but a player has to keep his eyes open and his glove low.

On fly balls, if players run to the right place, but still miss the ball, they are probably taking their eyes off the ball in that last second.

If players don't know where the ball is coming down, they just need more practice.

Judging fly balls is very hard.

The 'Dos' and 'Don'ts' of Fielding

You already know all this but do get ready before every play. Do bend your knees. Keep your glove open, hands low.

Do watch the ball.

Do run fast and wait, instead of running slowly and just meeting the ball. Charge ground balls.

Do catch with both hands.

Do get your body behind the ball.

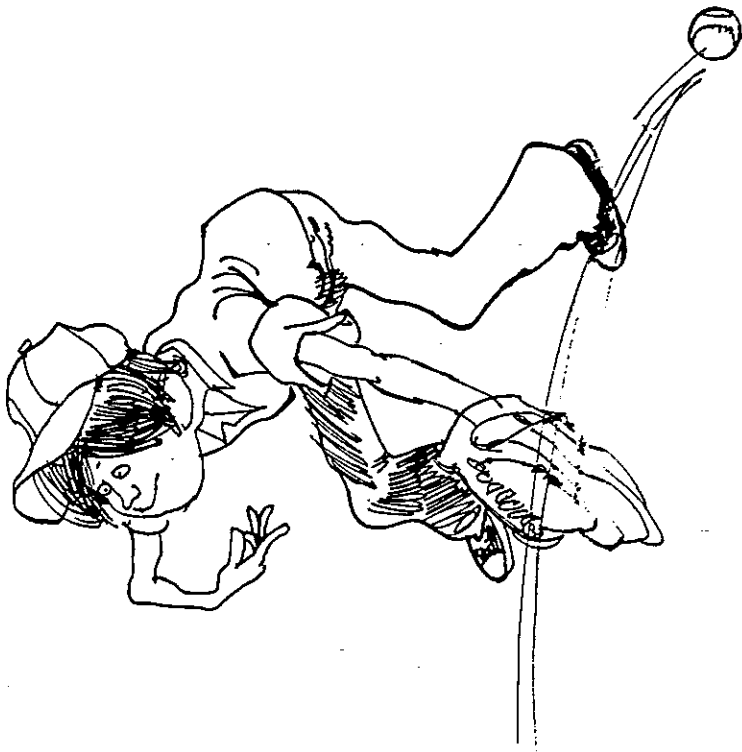
Do keep your glove low. Low.

How to Practice Fielding

Even good players have to practice fielding. The best practice is to get somebody to hit baseballs to you. Get your partner to hit easy ground balls first, then harder and harder ones. Get him to hit to your right and to your left.

If you can practice on pavement (a parking lot on a Sunday is a good place), use a tennis ball. Your partner can hit with a tennis racket.

By yourself, throw a tennis ball against your garage door or a wall. Catch it. When this becomes too easy, throw harder, or stand closer, or both.



Don't lift your head until you have the ball in your glove.

Don't take your eyes off the ball. Don't catch to the side.

Don't pedal backwards. Turn around, run, then turn around again.

Don't worry about being afraid. You can be a good player anyway.

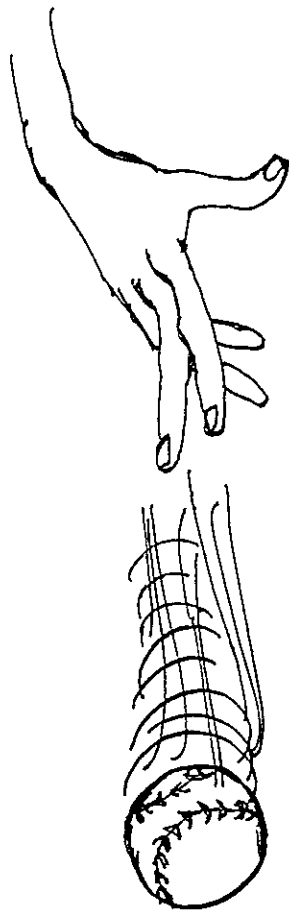


Common Mistakes and How to Fix Them

Some players who don't throw so well "push the ball" from near their chins. They should throw from behind the ear.

If the throws are always too low, they are probably stepping out too far with their front foot. They should take a shorter stride.

If the throws are always too high, they are not stepping out far enough. They should take a longer stride.



If they are always missing the target on the right, or on the left, they are probably not pointing the shoulder and the toe directly at the target.

If they are always throwing wild, they may be gripping the ball the wrong way, or throwing when they are not really ready. They should go through all the steps of getting ready.