

CUTOFF PLAYS

The way you decide to handle cutoffs from the outfield will vary depending on age and skill level. The following pages have a number of diagrams of how you can handle cutoffs at the youth level. Even if you simplify cutoffs for a younger team, try to instill the basics. For example, on a throw to home from left field have your third baseman be the cutoff. Don't have your shortstop be the cutoff person simply because he is the best athlete. Same applies with a throw to home from center or right. That's the role of the first baseman. Get them used to their roles on the basic plays from various positions.

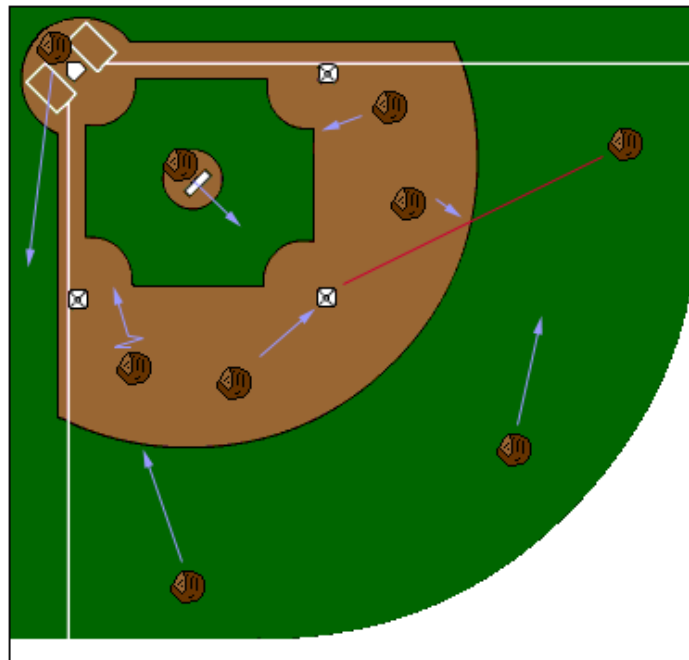
Hitting the Cutoff

Many coaches continually yell out to the outfield during the game, "Hit the cutoff man", "Make sure you hit the cutoff". Unless you practice plays which require a decision to be made during practice, your outfielders may not really understand why it's important. **All throws should be directed toward the base ahead of the runner, this allows for a cut and a throw behind if the runner makes a big turn.** During practice don't always have the ball go through to the base. Have your players use "Cut" followed by a different base.

When working on hitting the cutoff man in practice don't overlook the positioning of the cutoff. The following is a common example from an outfielders point of view. The outfielder in question has a strong arm. A runner is on first and there is a hit. The runner is going to attempt to make it to third base. The outfielder knows he has a great chance of throwing the runner out at third. The problem is the cutoff man has come out way too far. If he hits the cutoff man they probably won't get the runner at third. If he throws the ball to third, he has failed to hit the cutoff man. Either way he'll probably feel like he did the wrong thing. You may give him positive feedback if he hits the cutoff man on that play, but it's not that often that he gets a chance to throw a runner out and your positive feedback won't take away from the fact that he had an opportunity taken away from him.

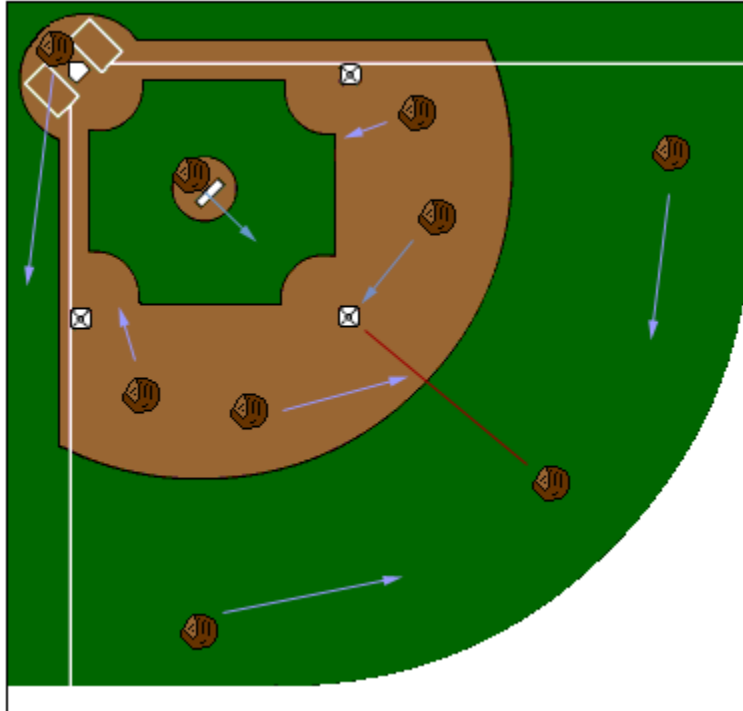
No Runners On Base - Single To Left Field

On a single to left field the shortstop will be the cutoff to second base. The second baseman will cover the bag. The first baseman should primarily back up the throw from left and then move towards first. This will put him into position to receive a throw at first in case the runner takes too large of a turn.



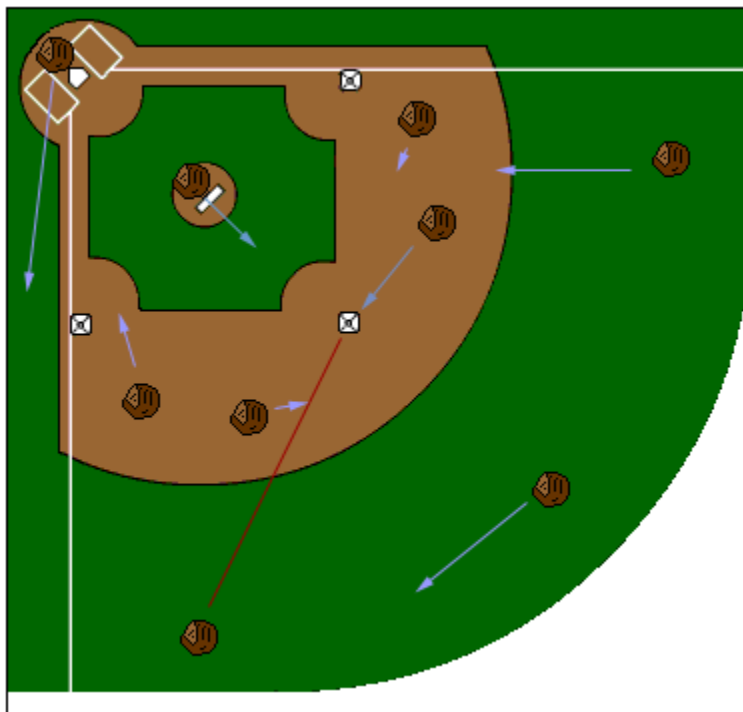
No Runners On Base - Single To Center Field

On a single to center field the second baseman will be the cutoff to second base. The shortstop will cover the bag. The pitcher must position himself to back up second base.



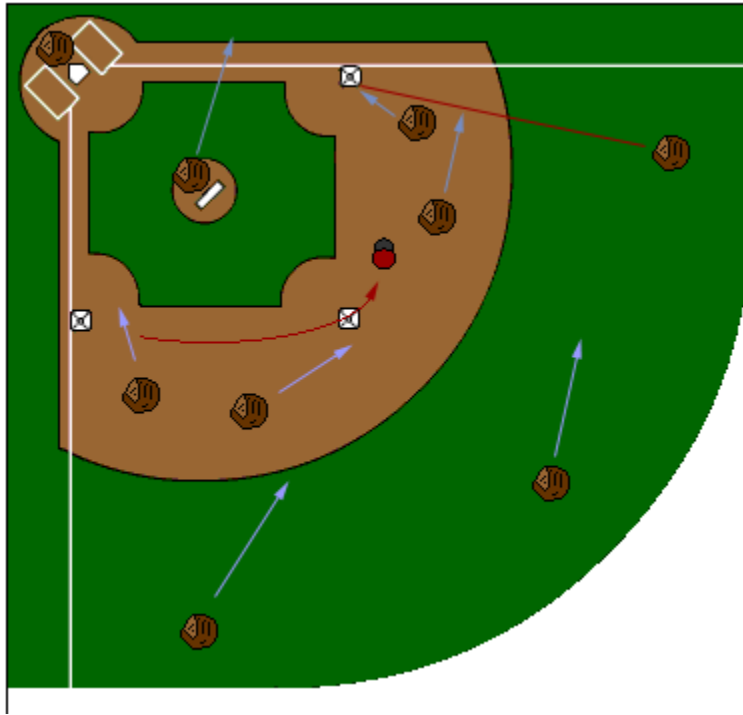
No Runners On Base - Single To Right Field

On a single to right field the second baseman will be the cutoff to second base. The shortstop will cover the bag. The left fielder and third baseman must back up second. First baseman must get close to first and be ready for a throw behind the runner.



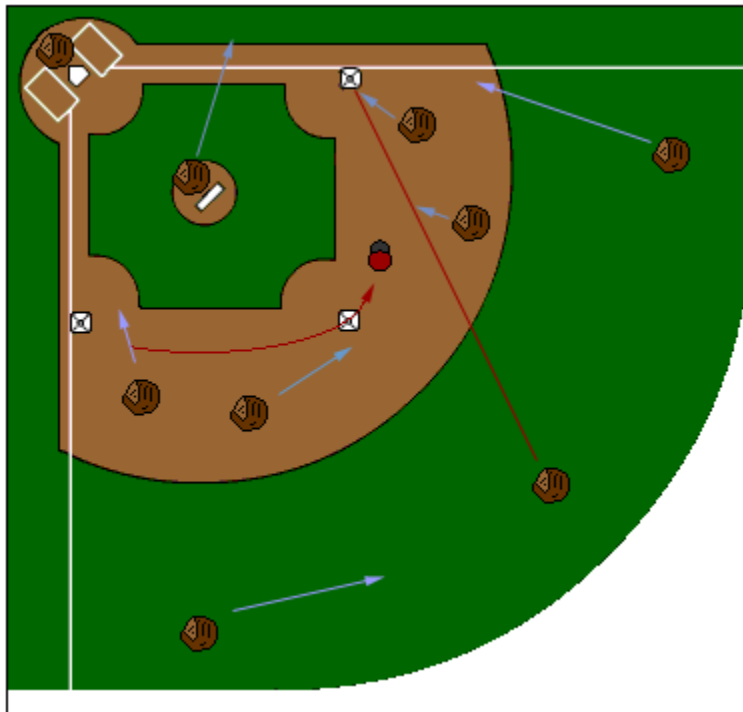
Runners On First - Single To Left Field

On a single to left field the shortstop will be the cutoff to third base. The second baseman will cover second base. The pitcher must hustle to get in position to back up third base. The catcher should also be in a position to back up the throw.



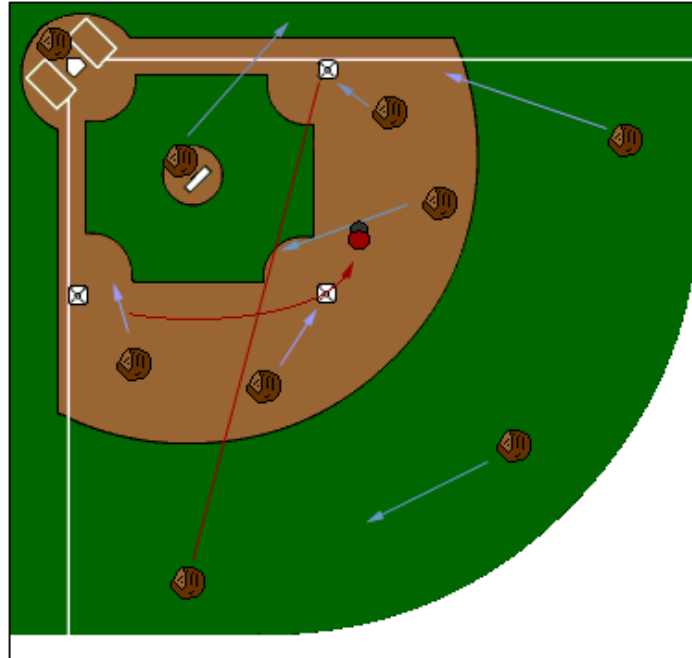
Runners On First - Single To Center Field

On a single to center field the shortstop will be the cutoff to third base. The second baseman will cover second base. The pitcher must hustle to get in position to back up third base. Unless the ball is hit to left center, the left fielder should move in to help back up third base.



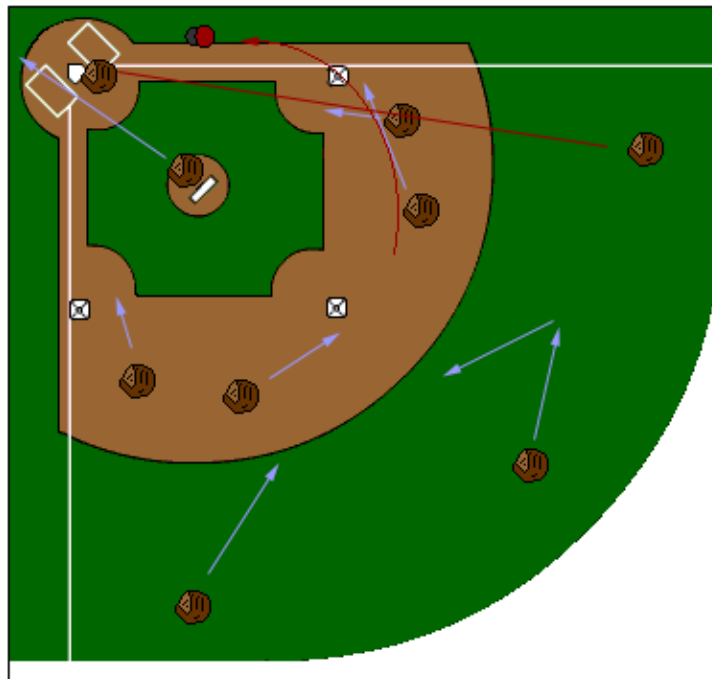
Runners On First - Single To Right Field

On a single to right field the shortstop will be the cutoff to third base. The second baseman will cover second base. The pitcher must hustle to get in position to back up third base. The left fielder should move in to help back up third base. With younger players you may want to have the second baseman be the cut on this play. It depends on the arm strength of the right fielder. In general you want to have the second baseman be the cutoff person if the shortstop would have to go on the second base side to be in proper position.



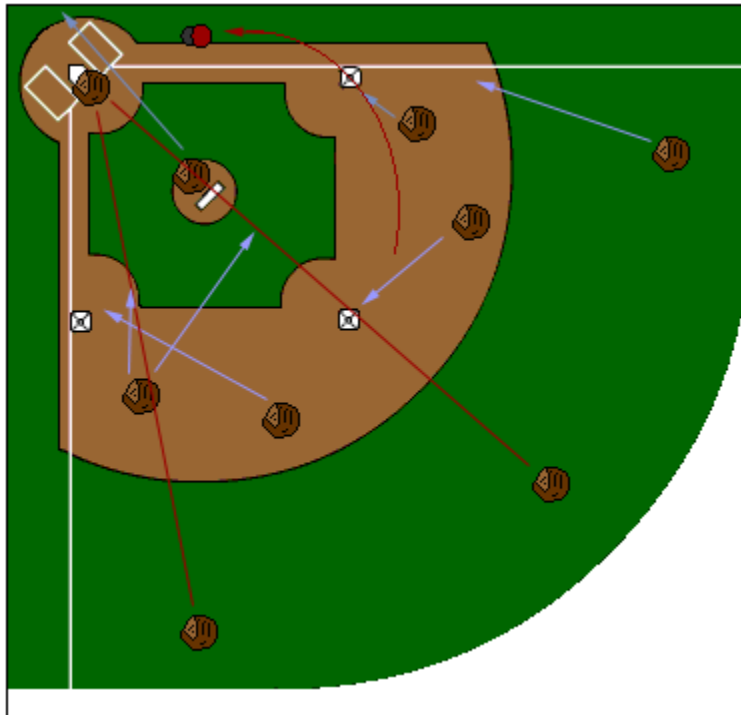
Runner On Second - Single To Left Field

On a single to left field the third baseman will be the cutoff to home. The shortstop will cover third base. The pitcher will backup home. The catcher will make the call if a cut is needed and to what base. The center fielder should start toward left and once the ball has been fielded cleanly, he should go to back up second in case a throw is made there either from the cutoff or the catcher.



Runner On Second - Single To Center or Right Field

On a single to center or right field the first baseman will be the cutoff to home. The shortstop will cover second base. The second baseman will cover first. The pitcher will backup home. The catcher will make the call if a cut is needed and to what base. The diagram below shows both options, with the only difference being the position of the first baseman as the cutoff.

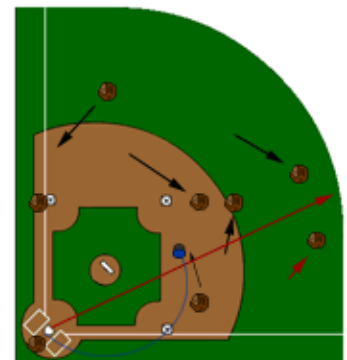
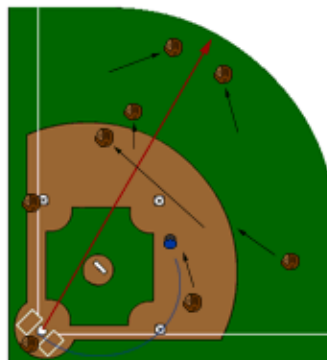


Runner On Third - Fly ball to the Outfield On fly ball hit to the outfield the cutoff is set up in the same manner as it would on a single to the outfield with a runner on second. You can refer to those diagrams to see player positions. On a fly ball hit to left field the third baseman will be the cutoff. On a fly ball to center or right field the first baseman will be the cutoff.

Double Cutoff - No Runners On Base - Possible Triple

On any hit into the gaps or down the lines with no runners on base and the outfielders are unable to cut it off, your middle infield should automatically move into double cutoff position for a throw to third base.

Have the infielder closest to the ball move out and be the first person in line for the throw. The other middle infielder should line up about 10 yards behind the first infielder. Having the infielders standing about 5 feet away from each other doesn't do much of anything. The infielders need to be spaced so together they can cover the most space on the throw coming in. The first baseman has the important role of trailing the hitter to second base. If the runner stops between second and third the first baseman has to be in position to get a throw at second either from the cutoff or in a run down situation.



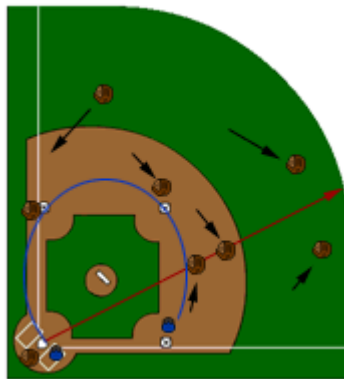
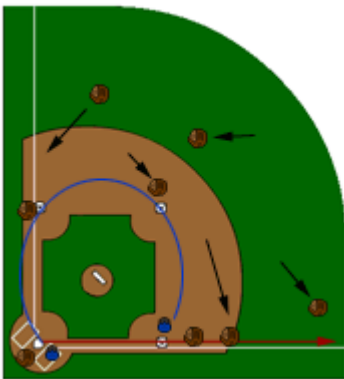
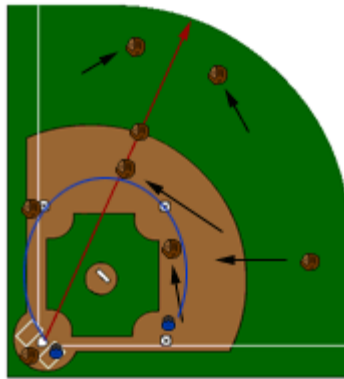
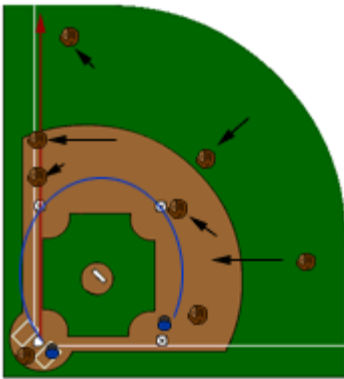
Double Cutoff - Runner at First - Possible Triple

On any hit into the gaps or down the lines with a runner at first and the outfielders are unable to cut it off, your first thought is to try and stop the runner from first from scoring. If the runner has average or better speed, this can be difficult to do. As you work on this play during practice make sure you use a runner at home and first and give the defense opportunities to make plays on both runners. Many times your team will have a better opportunity of throwing out the trailing runner at third than getting the lead runner at home.

You should have the shortstop or second baseman as the fielder going out and becoming the first person in the relay. The other infielder should line up about 10 yards behind the first infielder. The infielders need to be spaced so together they can cover the most space on the throw coming in.

The diagrams below show how you should position the defense for this play.

On any hit to left of left center, the first baseman has the important role of trailing the hitter to second base. If the runner stops between second and third the first baseman has to be in position to get a throw at second either from the cutoff or in a run down situation.



Double Cutoff Drill

Have a full defensive team on the field (minus pitchers). Use any extra players to run the bases. Hit the balls from the infield grass to make sure you are getting them in the proper gaps. Work on double cut relay from all positions in the outfield with no runners (throw to 3rd) and a runner on 1st (throw to home).

Have each group make a play from both lines and each gap before rotating.

Rotate players from outfield to infield to running. Rotation will differ depending on the number of players on the team.

This drill is also a good conditioning drill as players are continually running.

Below are 4 images of how to run double cutoff situations on balls hit to the gaps and down the lines

