

Infield Positioning (DEPTHS) for Baseball Situations

Learn the why, when and where of infield positioning, including double play depth, standard depth, infield in, and no doubles.

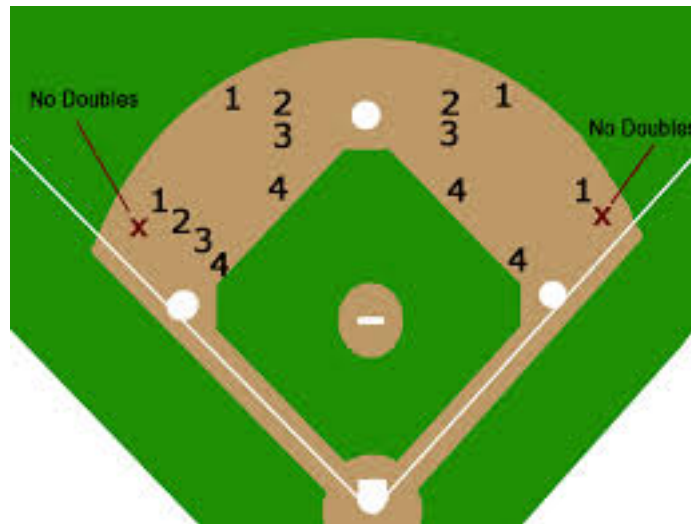
The infield depth at which you can play certain hitters depends on the inning, the score, how fast a runner is, and where runners are on the bases.

When in these depths, play 100% to these depths. If you are playing back don't worry if the hitter bunts. If you are playing in, it's ok if he gets a ground ball by you. Remember often times you are playing the percentages and sometimes they don't work out. But don't be in between, because that is when we make mistakes.

Note: Numbers classifies the depths of the infielders.

1. Standard Depth
 2. Double Play Depth
 3. Half-way Depth
 4. Infield in
 5. Not shown on the diagram below: see explanation at the bottom of this article
- No doubles signal/Hand behind head

Diagram of Infield Situational Positioning



Summary: Basic Situational Positioning for Infielders.

- Bases Empty: **Standard Depth (Position 1)**
- Runner At 1st Base: **Double Play Depth (position 2)** if less than 2 outs. If there are two outs, then back to standard depth positioning.
- Runners 1st And 3rd Bases: **Double Play Depth (position 2)** if less than 2 outs. If there are two outs, then back to standard depth positioning.
- Runner At 1st and 2nd Bases: **Double Play Depth (position 2)** if less than 2 outs. If there are two outs, then back to standard depth positioning.
- Bases Loaded: **Positions 2, 3 or 4**, depending on the situation. Look to the manager for his call.

#1 Normal Depth

The Goal

You are playing the percentages. The further back you play, the more time you will have to react. Your range increases, making it more difficult for the hitter to hit a ground ball through the infield. The tradeoff is that the throw to first base will be longer, and the play will take more time. You might want to adjust slightly, playing more forward or more back, based on factors such as the speed of the runner, how the hitter is being pitched, and hitter's tendencies.

The Situation

Two outs and no bunt is expected. The play is at 1st base.

The Setup

I usually measure this with how far from the outfield grass. The further back you can move, the more range you have and the more balls you can get to. This depth depends on how comfortable you are with your throw across the infield. The further back, the longer the throw to first base. This can be 5 to 15 feet in front of the outfield grass, and can be adjusted if needed for faster runners. See #1 on the infield-positioning diagram.

#2 Double play depth

The Goal

Double Play.

The Situation

Expect to play at double play depth any time there is less than two outs and first base is occupied. This includes if there are runners at 1st and 2nd, or bases loaded.

The Setup

Double play depth is different for every second baseman and differs slightly on how fast or slow the runners are or how fast the field plays. I will typically move in about 4 steps closer to the hitter from my normal position and take 4 steps closer to the second base bag. I will tweak my positioning a little depending on if a righty or lefty is hitting and what their tendencies are. The number one priority is that you can easily get to the second base bag on a ball hit to the pitcher, shortstop, or 3rd baseman with out them having to wait for you. You are giving up a little range to be able to get to the bag easier to complete double plays. Also most pitchers I have played with are trying to get the hitter to hit a ground ball up the middle into our positioning so they would like you to get to the balls up the middle more than the ones in the hole. See #2 for double play depth on the infield-positioning diagram.

#3 Halfway Depth: A Variation to Infield In

Under certain circumstances, you may want to keep more options open to yourself than playing far in allows. This setup differs because you will stand on the baseline, or in other words, a few step off the infield grass. If there is a slow runner at third, then you have more time and can back up. Also, if there are runners at 1st and 3rd and you want to keep your option for turning a double play open. If the ball is hit hard, you will try for the double play. If it is not hit hard enough, you will get the out at home. See #3 on the infield-positioning diagram.

The Goal

The defense wants to get the out at home plate on any hard hit ball directly at them. However, the infielders' want to have more range than they would have if they were all the way in (Position 4). This may help the team stay out of a big inning!

The Setup

The infield will play eight to ten feet off the infield grass

#4 Infield In

The Goal

To get an out at home plate

The Situation

1. Runner at 3rd and less than 2 outs (If there are two outs, play at normal depth and try for the out 1st base.)
2. Anytime you absolutely cannot let the runner score from third base

The Setup

- In this position your starting point will be where the infield grass meets the infield dirt. (See #4 on the infield positioning diagram)
- You can vary this distance a little, usually depending on the speed of runners.
- Ultimately, whether you play in or not is the manager/coach's call, so look for the signal during these situations. Sometimes early in games, the manager may choose allow the runner to score, preferring take the guaranteed out. However, if it is middle to late in the game, and especially if the score is close, you can expect the coach to pull the infield in. See #4 on the infield-positioning diagram.

#5 Bunt Defenses: The number is not shown on the diagram because it is a combination of two depths alignments.

- This depth alignment is used with less than 2 outs.
- The corner infielders are in position 4. If there is a runner on first base he naturally is holding on the runner.
- The middle infielders are in position 2. The second baseman does not take his steps toward second base however.

No Doubles

The Goal.

The idea behind this positioning is if we are going to give up a hit they are only going to get a single and not be able to stretch it into a double.

The Situation.

This strategy is most likely to be used when there are 2 outs in any inning or in the 8th or 9th inning, and if the score is tied, or if your team is leading by 1 or 2 runs. With 2 outs, the theory is that it would take three singles to score a runner from first base. The percentages are against the offense then in this situation.

The Setup.

The corner infielders play at standard depth and closer to the foul line – roughly 5 to 6 feet. Also, the outfield is playing farther back. This means that the shortstop and 2nd baseman have more territory to cover for fly balls.