

Force plays

There are a number of ways of getting a player out apart from making a catch. One method is through a force play. A force play is defined as a situation where a baserunner loses the right to the base which he/she is occupying and is 'forced' to proceed to the next base because the batter becomes a batter-runner.

A '**force out**' of the baserunner can be achieved by a fielder whilst in possession of the ball, by stepping on the base to which the baserunner is immediately progressing. In other words if a player can receive and control the ball (either thrown by another player or fielded) and then touch the base before the runner then the out is made. To ensure safety (and avoid collisions with the baserunner) it is important that the fielder learns the correct footwork for receiving a thrown ball in a force play.

This defensive play can also be termed 'getting the lead out' or 'getting the lead runner' which means taking away the closest baserunner to home plate and therefore the closest to the possibility of scoring.

In advanced softball getting, the lead runner is always the number one priority of the defensive team. With beginning players it is important that they make an out. Therefore, in most cases, it is a good strategy to throw to 1st Base as it takes the batter more time to get to the base than an advancing runner who is already on another base.

Making the force play - Setting up to receive the throw

- The player needs to get to the base as quickly as possible if not involved in fielding the ball
- The player turns and faces the ball, looking directly at the thrower
- The player stands close to the base with both heels 20-30 cms away from it with feet shoulder width apart
- The player then provides a target for the thrower by holding the glove out in front of their body at shoulder height



Receiving the thrown ball

- Once the throw is released the player lines up their glove with the incoming ball and places their right foot (if a right handed thrower) or left foot (if left handed) on the corner of the base
- Now the player can step forward stretching out their fielding glove towards the ball in order to make the catch
- With experience the player will learn to make both actions simultaneously; stepping towards the throw with one foot whilst placing the other on the corner of the base

Note: It is important that the player receiving the ball has sighted the throw before committing to 'anchoring' to the base. This will ensure if the throw is off target that they can still field the ball and prevent an overthrow.



With the correct footwork the base player can still catch inaccurate throws whilst maintaining contact with the corner of the base thus making the out.