

# HOW CAN MY PITCHER LEARN TO CONTROL THE BALL?

## In and Out

The ball goes where your pitcher's hand points when she releases the ball (on a fastball). The pitcher should try to release the ball at the same time her stride foot lands. Technically, this does not happen (her stride foot lands when her pitching hand is still behind her on the back of her arm circle) but to a pitcher it should FEEL like her hand releases the ball AS her stride foot lands. Otherwise, her hand will be late into the release zone as shown by the first pitcher below causing the ball to go off to the right.



This pitcher's hand is VERY late into the release zone and the arrow show's where the ball will go as a result



This pitcher isn't as late but her hand is still not directly behind the ball at the release point and as a result the ball will go off slightly to the right as the arrow show.



This pitcher is Monica Abbot who pitches for the USA Jr. National Team and for the University of Tennessee. Monica shows the correct hand position for release and the arrow also shows the result. (she's left handed so I reversed the picture) <http://www.softballexcellence.com>

# HOW CAN MY PITCHER LEARN TO CONTROL THE BALL?

## Up and Down

These same principles apply to targets that are HIGH and LOW – the ball goes (for a fastball) where the pitcher's hand was pointing when she released the ball. In order to throw pitches either HIGHER or LOWER the pitcher must make a slight adjustment in when she releases the ball. To throw a pitch slightly HIGHER a pitcher will release the ball slightly PAST her hip – or slightly LATER than for a normal down-the-middle fastball. To pitch a ball slightly LOWER a pitcher will make the opposite adjustment – she'll release the ball slightly BEFORE her hip, or slightly EARLIER than for a normal down-the-middle fastball. Let's take a look:



If this pitcher (Lisa Fernandez) were to release the ball at the point where it is in this picture – which is prior to her hand getting to the stripe in her shorts (early), then the ball will go in the direction of her hand and the arrow...DOWN.



This pitcher (Cat Osterman) is releasing the ball with her hand pointing directly at the middle of the strike zone so the ball will go straight ahead. (direction of arrow)



In this picture, if Lisa were to release the ball at the point in this picture (technically, she's already released it) which is slightly past the stripe on her shorts, then the ball would go in the direction of her hand, which is UP.

# PRACTICING CONTROL

## Inside and Outside

The quickest way to help your pitcher learn to control where her hand points as she releases the ball, and to therefore learn to control where the ball goes is to practice pitching to **EXTREMES**.

In this case the catcher will place his/her glove in 3 very extreme positions: Down the **MIDDLE**, **INSIDE** and **OUTSIDE**. At first alternate after 5 pitches (whether the pitcher hits the target or not), then after 3 and then after each pitch.

The more beginning your pitcher (or the worse her control) the greater the distance needs to be between these 3 locations. After your pitcher has practiced this for a week or so (and you can notice her hitting each target a majority of the time) then continue to work on these 3 locations but shorten the distance between them.

Eventually, your pitcher will be able to hit each target no matter where your catcher places her glove, but it takes time and a gradual progression to get there.

## MIDDLE



## OUTSIDE



## INSIDE



# PRACTICING CONTROL

## High and Low

These same principles apply to practicing to hit targets that are HIGH and LOW – the ball goes (for a fastball) where the pitchers hand was pointing when she released the ball. In order to throw pitches either HIGHER or LOWER the pitcher must make a slight adjustment in when she releases the ball. Practice with your catcher standing up and placing one target HIGH, another target MIDDLE and the 3<sup>rd</sup> target LOW. Practice alternating your pitches to each target remembering that you release slightly LATER for HIGH PITCHES, AT THE STRIKE on your shorts for MIDDLE pitches, and slightly EARLY for LOW pitches.

Eventually, your pitcher will be able to hit each target no matter where your catcher places her glove, but it takes time and a gradual progression to get there.

