

Catching Skills and Drills

The following document is a high-level introduction to some catching concepts.

Primary Stance (no runners on)

- Athletic. Weight on balls feet, should not tip over if giving a light push.
- Staggered feet (right hand thrower, left foot slightly in front of right foot).
- Feet wider than hips so good balance. Not leaning forward or backwards.
- A little more relaxed, make sure player is comfortable

Secondary Stance (runners on)

- Raise butt a little higher
- Chest slightly forward.
- Ready to transition to throwing position as quickly as possible on steal attempt.

Throwing Hand in Stance

- Hide behind throwing side calf (older ages)
- Hide behind back (younger ages)

Extension - "Stick it"

Catch the ball in front of you, **easier to see**. As the ball carries greater chance of dropping and tougher for you and the umpire to see.

Glove Work

- Before pitch – no extension, glove hand more relaxed but still slightly away from body.
- Receiving - not stabbing
 - Thumb Side – down the middle
 - Thumb Up – inside pitch
 - Thumb Down – outside pitch

Body Position

- Sway upper body to the ball
- Nose to the ball

Framing

- Get around the pitch with glove by swaying or minor movement in direction of the pitch
- **Gently** turn glove to home base on border line pitches. Moving an obvious ball to the strike zone is not going to fool the umpire and might prevent future close pitches from being called a strike.

Catcher Position

- Check batter's stance when get in box. If you can touch back leg of hitter to close. Main issue, catcher is too far back → more balls in the dirt → more pass balls.
- Don't tip off pitch location: Starting position should right behind tip of plate when providing signals. As the pitcher starts the motion quickly move to the desired location.

Throwing

Important: *Other than "throw from knees", all the techniques below involve moving feet such that body in forming a straight line with the target. Need to transition into a "scarecrow" position as quickly as possible.*

- At younger ages, the player's arm strength is still developing, might try to compensate that by taking more steps to the base (avoid this!). Try to encourage a couple different footwork techniques
 1. "Replace Feet" – slide back foot to the original position of the front foot and then take a normal step with front foot.
 2. "Skateboard" – rotate feet into a skateboard position; do not hop; always remain contact with ground.
- At older ages, the player's arm strength is stronger, focus should be on quick release.
 1. "Shift Weight Back" – as transitioning ball from glove to hand, simultaneously "load" on back leg and then take normal step with front foot.
 2. "Throw from knees" – advanced move for catchers with strong arms. Dropping knees to ground, throw and make sure finish over front side.
- Quick Transition: bring glove to throwing hand. Do not reach into glove for ball.
- Do not stand up, stay low.
- No "rainbows": make sure throw is on a line, aiming to throw at pitcher's head.
- Throw to the Base: it's the job of the infielder to get to the base after the pitch is past the hitter.

Blocking

- Lean chest slightly forward over the ball
- Head down watching ball into glove. Also, tucking the head protects from ball hitting the catcher in the exposed part of neck.
- Glove should be placed to cover the opening between the legs
- Throwing hand behind the glove for protection.
- Front: 2 options
 1. Kick feet out, fall to knees
 2. Drop knees straight to the ground (more efficient method; less movement)
- Side: Take quick "baby" step with ball side foot and then push off opposite foot in the direction of ball. Okay if glove goes first body follows second. Angle body such that the ball will land near the plate.

Signals

- Catcher should use glove to shield signals from the 3rd base coach
- Place the signal in between the knees closer to crotch so 1st base and hitter cannot see the signal.

Foul Balls

- Turn back to infield just like if catching a fly ball in the outfield
- Recommend leaving helmet on and instead of the possibility of dropping the helmet and falling over it.

Communication → to provide catcher on direction of foul ball.

- “Glove”: glove side
- “Hand”: throwing hand side
- “Up”: above the catcher

Covering Bunts

- 3rd base line – play at first: Take a direct line to the ball, then pivot to the direction of 1st base
- 1st base line – play at first: Circle the ball to ensure straight path to 1st base.
- Pickup: ball is stopped → barehand; ball is moving → use throwing hand and glove to gather the ball.

Dropped 3rd Strikes

- Create a Path: Based on where the ball is located, create a path so runner is not visible in the throwing lane. For example, if dropped in foul territory → stay in foul territory. If don't create a path, two things usually happen 1. Hit the runner or 2. Throw over first baseman's head to avoid hitting the runner.

Catching Drills

**Workout catchers separately from pitchers, last couple of minutes they can catch some live pitching.*

1. Framing Progression

Setup: Tennis balls, hard balls

Objective: Extension, get around pitch with glove/hand, swaying to the pitch

Description:

- a) S/B first daily drill
- b) Coach or extra catcher throw tennis balls to catcher (w/o glove)
- c) Catcher working on extension, swaying to the pitch, nose to the glove.
- d) Thumb position, coach can call out pitch to assist catcher with proper position
- e) Switch to hard balls w/ glove.
- f) Extension: coach can count "1,2,3" to exaggerate the action.

2. Blocking Drill Progression

Setup: Tennis balls, hard balls

Objective: Practice front and side blocking

Description:

- a) Coach or extra catcher throw tennis/hard balls to catcher. Start with front block. Make sure using proper technique. Quality over quantity. 3 -5 balls.
- b) Same as (a) expect side block.

3. Blocking Drill - Front

Setup: 4 balls

Objective: Practice front blocking

Description:

- a) Space out four balls in a straight line
- b) Catcher runs up to each ball, gets into stance and performs a front block.
- c) Repeat for other 3 balls. Start over and continue 2-3 more times.

4. Blocking Drill - Side

Description: [4 corner catching block drill](#)

5. Glove to Throwing Hand Drill

Setup: 3 – 5 balls

Objective: Practice transitioning glove to throwing hand and footwork

Description:

- a) Can have catcher receive throw or start w/ ball in glove
- b) Depending on (a) coach might need to start drill by saying "Going" if ball in glove; otherwise start drill when receive ball

- c) Catcher using proper footwork technique and transitions to throwing hand.
- d) Once in throwing hand, catcher just throws the ball behind them.
- e) Isolating the ball transfer, not concerned about the actual throw.

6. Cardio - Throw Down Drill

Setup: 3 balls

Objective: Practice throwing to second, building endurance

Description:

- a) One catcher at second base receiving throw.
- b) Catcher at home plate will throw 2 balls to second base and replace the catcher at second base on the third one.
- c) Good drill if have a couple of catchers.

7. Lateral Plank Walks with Ball Toss

Description: [Catcher Agility Drills](#)

8. Up/Down with Ball Toss

Description: [Catcher Agility Drills](#)

9. Lateral Block with Ball Toss

Description: [Catcher Agility Drills](#)

10. Dropped 3rd Strike Drill

Setup: 4 cones, 4 balls

Objective: Catcher covering dropped 3rd strikes

Description:

- a) Place 4 cones around the catcher; 2 in front and 2 in back. Place ball on each cone. Simulating where the ball could land on dropped 3rd strike.
- b) Each cone has a numbered assigned to it (1-4).
- c) Coach initiates the play with trigger word (e.g. "1").
- d) Catcher must make sure clear a path and make accurate throw to first base
- e) Could have other catchers step-in as runners to first.

11. Bunting Drill

Setup: 3 balls

Objective: Catcher covering bunts

Description:

- a) Place one ball in front of home plate, the second on 3rd baseline and the last one on the 1st base line. Simulating where the ball could land on a bunt. Also, could stand behind the catcher and roll the ball to the desired location.
- b) Catcher must use the proper footwork and make accurate throw to 1st base.

12. Stealing Home

Setup: 3 balls

Objective: Pitcher/Catcher covering home on a steal due to passed ball

Description:

- a) Coach places 3 balls at the backstop behind the catcher
- b) Pitcher pretends to throw pitcher
- c) Coach will say "Left, Right or Middle"
- d) Pitcher covers home, catcher hustles to backstop to pick up ball and deliver accurate throw to pitcher.

13. Foul Ball (Glove, Throwing Hand, Up)

Setup: 3 balls

Objective: Practice catching foul balls.

Description:

- e) Coach stands behind the catcher and simulate a pop-up behind the catcher.
- f) Coach will either say "Glove", "Throwing Hand" or "Up."
- g) Catcher needs to turn in the appropriate direction and make sure "butt to infield" to make the catch.

14. Mirror Drill

Setup: Pair of catchers

Objective: Reaction time, blocking

Description:

- a) Catchers line up about 3 feet across from each other.
- b) One of the catchers takes the "lead" and the other catcher will be the "follower".
- c) The "lead" will execute a blocking action (front, right side, left side) and the follower must mirror (i.e. mimic) the leader.