

PITCHING AND CATCHING



CONTEXTS:

- COMPETITION - INTRODUCTION / PROVINCIAL COACH
- INSTRUCTION - BEGINNER



Coach:

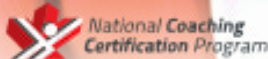
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1

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the pitching and catching clinic!

In this clinic, you will have the opportunity to understand the basic teaching techniques involved with pitching and catching. Coaches will also gain an understanding of the importance of tracking, organizing and scheduling youth pitchers. Throwing programs for pitchers are important factors in developing baseball athletes in accordance with LTAD guidelines.

The pitch count philosophy will be echoed and emphasized in this workbook. Pitch count tracking was implemented as a tool to protect against overuse injuries but it also has spin-off effects that are positive to the future growth of the game.

One responsibility of a baseball coach is to help athletes improve their performance by helping them to learn, and then apply what they have learned. In this clinic you will see how to optimize your athletes' development by implementing effective teaching methods in your coaching sessions.



There are basic characteristics that are common to the position of catching and through this clinic you will learn to assist your athletes in developing their skills at the catching position.



The objective of this clinic is to offer guidance on developing two positions in baseball in which athletes are particularly sensitive to overuse injuries.

Pitching and catching positions have also been identified as positions that require careful thought when scheduling playing time. Therefore, it is important to take time to schedule practice and game sequencing in order to optimize your athletes' performance. It is also important for coaches to understand the rules governing the pitcher position in the Canadian content section of the Baseball Canada Rule Book.

Enjoy the clinic!



2

MECHANICS OF PITCHING



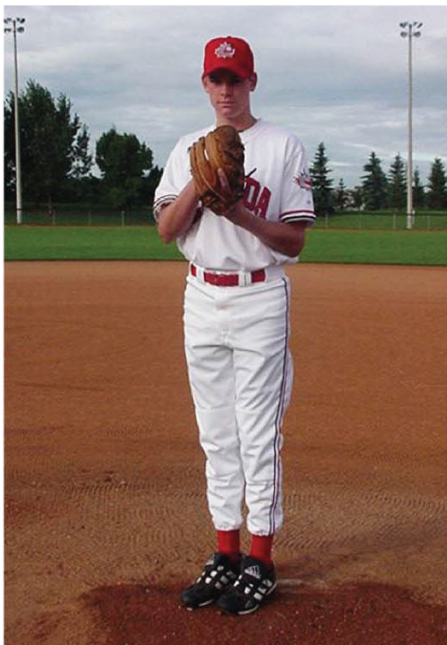
Full Wind Up

Pitching terminology

Pivot foot/leg:	The foot/leg on the throwing arm side.
Stride foot/leg:	The foot/leg on the glove side.
Landing foot:	The foot/leg on the glove side.
Power position:	The point of contact in the delivery when both feet are grounded.
Top spinning:	When a pitcher's shoulder rotates side to side upon delivery of the baseball.
Pitcher's plate:	Rubber strip on the top of the mound.



Starting Position: Key Points



- The pitcher should stand on the throwing side of the pitcher's plate (right side) for right-handed pitchers and (left side) for left-handed pitchers.
 - *It's tougher on the batter because they are seeing the ball arriving at an angle that may start on the back side of the batter.*
 - *The angle makes it easier to cover the entire plate, which will promote more strike throwing.*
- Young pitchers should start with both heels on the pitcher's plate with the feet slightly turned towards third base for right-handed pitchers and first base for left-handed pitchers.
- A pitcher's body should face or be square to the catcher with their eyes focused on the target.
- The knees should be slightly flexed and the pitcher should be comfortable and relaxed



Mechanics of pitching (continued)

- The pitcher's arms, shoulders and elbows should also be relaxed and in a comfortable position.
- Pitchers should start with their hands together in the glove or the throwing hand at their side with the glove at their chest. In both cases, the baseball should be in the glove to start.
 - *Encourage younger pitchers to start with their hand on the ball, in the glove. This will ensure that they do not drop the ball, and will allow them to acquire the grip prior to initiating the pitch.*

IMPORTANT

Emphasize to your pitchers that it is important to use the same set up at all times. This will minimize the development of mechanical flaws in their delivery.



Notes:

Start of the Delivery: Key Points



The Step Back

- The stride foot should move straight back or at a slight angle to the side while taking a portion of the weight off the pivot foot.
- The pitcher's head should remain focused on the target.
- The hands should move up or down. The amount of movement is a personal preference but should be minimized with younger athletes. Some pitchers will raise their hands over their head, while others will move their hands only slightly. It is important that they feel comfortable and note that extra movements can cause issues with the pitcher's balance.

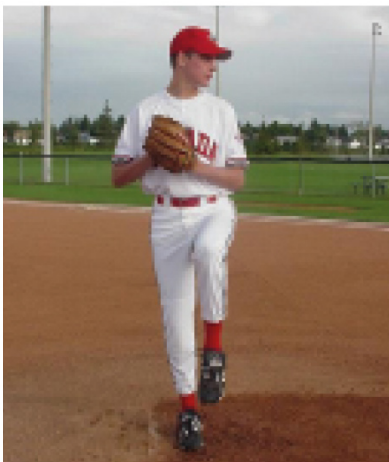
Mechanics of pitching (continued)

The Turn

- The inside of the pivot foot should face the target.
- The outside of the pivot foot should be against the front edge of the pitcher's plate. Some pitchers will put the back portion of their spikes on the pitcher's plate. This may cause the pitcher to slip and should be discouraged.

The Balance Position

- The weight should 100% be on the pivot foot.
- The stride foot leg (thigh) should rise to a comfortable level, either parallel or slightly above parallel to the ground, with the knee bent at a 90-degree angle. Balance drills become very important for this reason.
- The foot should be in a relaxed position with the toes pointing slightly downward to ensure the pitcher does not land on their heel.
- The hands should be together in the middle of the body.
- The head should be turned with the eyes on the target.
- The glove-side shoulder and stride leg hip should be directed at the target.





Mechanics of pitching (continued)

»» The Stride: Key Points



The Hand Break

- The hands should be together in the middle of the body at the balance point.
- The elbows should be relaxed in a comfortable position.
- As the stride begins, the throwing hand and the stride leg should move in opposite directions with the weight starting to transfer toward the target.
- As the hands come apart, the thumbs on the glove hand and throwing hand should turn down and pass over the stride leg.
- The hands continue to circle until the elbow is at shoulder height with both the throwing hand and the glove-side hand.



▶ Notes: _____

Mechanics of pitching (continued)

The Stride

- As the stride leg moves down and forward, the pitcher's weight should stay over the pivot foot and gradually transfer towards the landing area.
- The key to the stride is moving the foot in the direction of the target. For example, landing on a line between the middle of your pivot foot and the centre of home plate.
- The stride foot should be slightly closed when it lands. The focus should be to land on the inner front area of the foot.
- The stride knee should be slightly bent when landing.
- The length of the stride is important. It should be approximately 90% of the height of the athlete.
- It is important that pitchers repeat this sequence effortlessly in order to create consistency in their delivery.



Notes:



Mechanics of Pitching

The Power Throwing Position

Throwing Side:

- Make sure the throwing arm and elbow are at shoulder height with the hand turned away from the target.
- The baseball should be gripped with the fingers on the top of the ball, with the palms and thumb facing down.



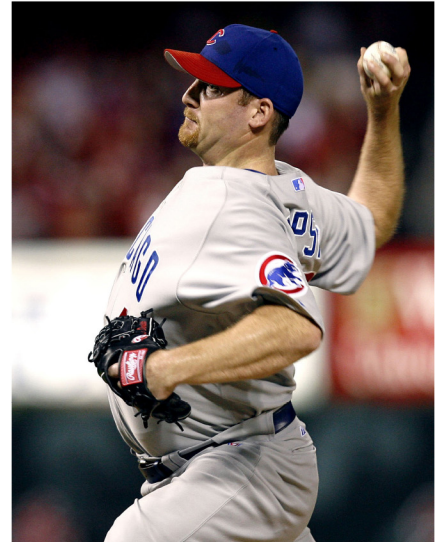
Mechanics of pitching (continued)

Glove Side:

- Make sure the glove arm and elbow are at shoulder height with the glove angled between 90 degrees and being straight.
- The glove should be positioned with the palm of the glove facing the target and the thumb facing down.

The Action:

- The pivot foot should rotate inwards and the heel of the pivot foot should point towards the sky.
- The shoulders should rotate with the hips but not necessarily in a side-to-side action. This is known as top-spinning.
- The shoulders and head should remain behind the stride leg knee.
- The glove hand arm will then be pulled toward the chest along with the chest being transferred toward the glove.
- The chest, belt buckle, back knee and chin should all be directed at the target.



Notes:



Mechanics of pitching (continued)

The Follow Through

- All energy will move towards the target. Remind pitchers that they should not fall to the side.
- Bending at the waist will allow the throwing arm to continue on its natural path past the front knee and weight should transfer over the stride foot leg.
- The pivot foot should release from the pitcher's plate and the pivot foot leg should form a "V" and then be placed beside the stride foot, more than shoulder-width apart.
- The pitcher will now be in a good position to field the baseball.



Notes:



3 PITCHER'S GRIPS

In keeping with the theme of Long Term Athlete Development, we will avoid discussing breaking pitches involving pronating and supinating the wrist in this introductory Pitching and Catching module. It is important that coaches understand the importance of teaching players to throw strikes using pitches they are comfortable repeating, a high percentage of the time. Research suggests that young pitchers should focus on throwing fastballs and change-ups.



Fastball and Change-Up

Fastball Descriptions:



Four-seam Grip

- This grip allows the baseball to travel straight and is also encouraged for all position players. The four-seam fastball is the easiest pitch to consistently locate. The ball should be held across the widest seams, the "C", on the baseball. The fingertips should be placed on the seams and the thumb should be placed under the baseball to help support the baseball and encourage more consistency in location.



Two-seam Grip

- This grip allows for the baseball to move slightly off its directional course. It should be discouraged for positional players when making their throws, because of this movement. Pads of fingers should be placed on the seams of the baseball with the fingers running along the seams. The thumb should be placed under the baseball to help support the baseball and encourage more consistency in release of the pitch.

Pitcher's Grips (continued)

»» Change-up Descriptions:

The change-up action on release should be similar in look and feel to a fastball. The arm action should be the same as the fastball delivery, but the ball is released slightly earlier. The fingers and wrist are the last joints involved prior to the release point, and with more advanced pitchers, these may be slightly restricted. Generally, the ball is gripped deeper in the hand for all change-up pitches.

- ▶ Young pitchers should be taught to practice various grips while playing catch, but using a basic fastball delivery. Pronating or supinating the wrist to make the baseball move can be detrimental to arm health in the future.

Two-Finger Change-up (Stage 1)

- The baseball is held deep in the fingers with the thumb placed toward the side of the baseball for support. The fingers should be placed similar to a fastball. The follow through for change-up pitches is the same as that for a fastball. This change-up would be considered introductory and is also encouraged for younger athletes with smaller hands.



Three-Finger Change-up (Stage 2)

- The baseball is held deep in the fingers with the thumb placed toward the side of the baseball for support. The fingers should be placed similar to a fastball except the middle finger is in the centre of the baseball. See above for required finish, which is consistent with all change-ups. This change-up would be considered introductory and is also encouraged for younger athletes with smaller hands who cannot hold the baseball with the fore and middle fingers.





Pitcher's Grips (continued)

Three Finger Off-set Change-up (Stage 3)

- The baseball is held deep in the fingers with the thumb placed toward the side of the baseball for support. The fingers should be placed similar to a fastball except the baseball is now off-centred and should be gripped with the middle and ring finger on the throwing hand. See above for required finish which is consistent with all change-ups. This change-up would be considered more advanced.



Circle Change-up (Stage 4)

- The baseball is held deep in the fingers with the thumb and forefinger forming a circle on the side of the baseball. The ball is not gripped tightly, but this pitch has maximum effect as far as natural movement and fastball-to-change-up velocity difference. See above for required finish, which is consistent with all change-ups. This change-up would be considered advanced and should only be used with athletes that have stronger hands.





4

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ROLE AS A COACH

Understanding your role as a Coach

In the following questions, identify the options available to the coach to incorporate positive feedback to the pitcher, based on detecting mechanical errors. Significant mechanical corrections should be addressed during practice or bullpen sessions. It is best to provide reminders only during games, so pitchers are not distracted from the task at hand.

As a coach, you have identified the following mechanical errors that need to be addressed:



» Question 1: Kelsey does not maximize his throwing mechanics and it looks as though he is throwing a pancake. He is not utilizing all the joints involved with pitching.

▶ Interaction/feedback:

Handwritten response area with horizontal lines.



Understanding your role as a Coach (continued)

»» Question 2: *Dan looks as though he is stepping towards first base when he is throwing to the catcher. He is definitely not stepping toward the target.*

▶ Interaction/feedback:

Lined area for writing interaction/feedback for Question 2.

»» Question 3: *Ashley is having trouble staying balanced and it looks as though she is not comfortable rotating her hips when throwing the baseball to the catcher.*

▶ Interaction/feedback:

Lined area for writing interaction/feedback for Question 3.



Understanding your role as a Coach (continued)

For each of the situations in the first column of the table below, identify the possible options for interacting with your pitcher.



Start with the first situation and review each Option against that situation. Indicate **YES** or **NO** in the appropriate box under each Option, or write **N/A** (not applicable) if the Option does not apply in the present situation. Leave the space blank if you are not sure and you will get an answer during the debrief

Options Pitching situations	Option 1 A Coach to make no intervention	Option 2 A Coach to make an intervention	Option 3 A Coach to instruct the athlete with less feedback	Option 4 A Coach to instruct the athlete with more feedback
Pitcher gives up a base hit on the first pitch of the game.				
Pitcher walks the first batter of the game and you notice a poor release.				
Pitcher is starting to have trouble in the game and you notice mechanics are breaking down.				
Pitcher throws a ball the first pitch of a bullpen session during practice.				
Pitcher is struggling to throw strikes in the bullpen session and you notice a poor release.				
Pitcher is throwing the ball well but you notice some mechanical flaws.				
The pitcher becomes frustrated at not being able to hit the target set by the catcher.				
After making suggestion, you notice the pitcher cannot apply what you are relaying to them.				

KEY POINT

The key point to this exercise is to maximize your interactions and identify what a pitcher can, and cannot absorb, based on game and practice situations. There are obvious differences in the age groups with respect to learning retention, as well as the way individuals learn. As a coach, you should identify your athlete's preferred learning style so you can be most effective when correcting errors.



Mechanics of pitching (continued)

» Making a Decision: Selecting the Best Option

When making a decision to have interaction with a pitcher, always make sure to do the following:

- Evaluate the situation and the factors that can influence your decision-making.
- Be sure to apply the most appropriate action that will benefit your pitcher.
- Maximize your athlete's learning based on knowing their personality traits.
- Always be receptive to feedback from the athlete.
- Encourage athletes to ask questions.





Understanding your role as a Coach (continued)

»» Factors that could influence a coach when interacting with a pitcher

Understanding your
role as a Coach

Possible influences	How could this influence the coach?
The decision might have an impact on the coach's job.	
The decision might influence, positively or negatively, the development of the coach's career.	
The situation might have an effect on the development of the athlete.	
The situation might have an effect on the outcome of the game.	
The decision might undermine personal relations between other coaches and/or parents.	
It is important to make an immediate decision.	
Other.	



Understanding your role as a Coach (continued)

Preferred Priorities for Pitching

The following grid is designed to help you determine the preferred priorities for pitching. Complete the grid in order of highest-to-lowest priority.

Priorities for Pitching	
Velocity:	A pitcher's genetic makeup, for the most part, influences how fast a pitcher can throw a baseball. More recently, strength and conditioning and other training have also aided velocity gains in pitchers.
Change of speed:	Adding and subtracting velocity to your pitches to keep the batter off balance.
Location:	Throwing the baseball where you want (up, down, inside or outside).
Movement:	The baseball will move either naturally or with the assistance of the pitcher in a manner that puts the baseball in a location off the barrel of the bat at the contact point.

Place the Following in order of Importance: Velocity, Change of speed, Location, Movement.

1 _____ 3 _____

2 _____ 4 _____

There can be variations in the order or priority, however, you should be prepared to defend your opinion!



5

ORGANIZING YOUR PITCHERS



Scheduling: Pitch Count and Innings



Pitch Count Exercise

In the Tracking Form below, shade in the box or boxes that represent the required days of rest for a pitcher, based on the Pitch Count Rest Grid. Place a checkmark in the box that indicates the next time the pitcher can pitch. A day of rest starts at 12:01am of the following calendar day.

NOTE

Pitcher cannot pitch 3 consecutive days unless a pitcher's first 2 days combined does not exceed; 11U (Mosquito) - 25; 15U Boys / 16U Girls (Bantam) - 35; 13U (Pee Wee) - 30; 18U (Midget)/Canada Cup/Canada Games - 40. If pitcher's day 1 + day 2 exceeds figure above for their division, they require at least 1 day rest. Pitcher cannot pitch 4 consecutive days. One (1) day rest is needed if a pitcher does pitch 3 days in a row. Pitchers can throw over the maximum number of pitches if they went into the current at-bat under the maximum number for that particular pitch count grid. For example, if a pitcher went into the last at-bat with a count of 84 then he/she could finish off the batter because the maximum is set at 85 for the day.

Exercise # 1

Pitch Count Rest Grid

Pitches	1 day	2 days	3 days
1 - 25	X		
26 - 45		X	
46 - 65			X

Exercise # 1

Tracking Form

Pitchers	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
John	36			10			
Matt			33				
Robert		21					
Susan	10		65				
Mark	64				10		



Organizing your pitchers (continued)

Organizing your pitchers

Exercise # 2 Pitch Count Rest Grid

Pitches	No day	1 day	2 days
1 - 20	X		
21 - 35		X	
36 - 45			X

Exercise # 2 Tracking Form

Pitchers	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
Jim	10	10		45			
Greg	45			10			
Andre			25		34		
Marcel	15						
Alex	45		90				





Organizing your pitchers (continued)

Exercise # 3 Pitch Count Rest Grid

Pitches	2 days	3 days	4 days
36 - 45	X		
46 - 65		X	
66 - 85			X

Exercise # 3 Tracking Form

Pitchers	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
Denise	50				36		
Brad			54				
Dan	84						
David		36			36		
Morgan			90				





Organizing your pitchers (continued)

Pre-Game Preparation

Pre-game routines are very important and will lead to consistent pitching performances, even in younger pitchers. In the scenario below, establish your pitcher's pre-game routine by indicating the amount of time for each aspect of the warm-up. Remember that they should have at least 5 minutes of rest prior to the start of the game.



Home Team Scenario

Game Time: 6:00 pm

Fill in the blanks

Time

- 1 Warm up and stretch _____
- 2 Play catch _____
- 3 Throw to a catcher _____
- 4 End bullpen session _____

of pitches

- 5 Fastballs _____
- 6 Change-ups _____
- 7 Pitch-outs _____
- 8 Simulated game _____

Total Pitches:



Organizing your pitchers (continued)

Visiting Team Scenario

Game Time: 3:00 pm

» Fill in the blanks

- 1 Warm up and stretch
- 2 Play catch
- 3 Throw to a catcher
- 4 End bullpen session

Time

of pitches

- 5 Fastballs
- 6 Change-ups
- 7 Pitch-outs
- 8 Simulated game

▶ Total Pitches:





Organizing your pitchers (continued)

Coaching Scenarios

The following scenarios will help coaches identify options available to them so they have positive interactions with their athletes.



Question 1: Susan has missed 4 practices and 2 games because she has been away on a family vacation, and she is one of your top pitchers. You are going into a weekend where you know that you are going to need all the players on your team to pitch. How do you schedule the 3 days leading up to the weekend and the 4-to-5 games that you may play on Saturday and Sunday? Identify the things that you will have to address. Also, consider the pitching rules for your specific region.

Interaction/feedback:

Lined area for writing interaction/feedback.



Organizing your pitchers (continued)

»» Question 2: *Bobby has told you in the past few days that he is experiencing soreness in his elbow. He has been your best pitcher statistically this season and you have the biggest tournament of the year approaching in 7 days. What steps should you take to ensure the health of Bobby? Also, consider the pitching rules for your specific region.*

▶ Interaction/feedback:





Organizing your pitchers (continued)

» Question 3: It is early and you feel your team has a chance to compete for the league championship at the end of the season. Identify the advantages and disadvantages of choosing the following paths to managing your pitching staff,

▶ A. Use only your better pitchers?

Advantages: [Lined area for writing]

Disadvantages: [Lined area for writing]

▶ B. Use all the players on the roster to pitch?

Advantages: [Lined area for writing]

Disadvantages: [Lined area for writing]

6

INTRODUCTION TO CATCHING

Catchers are unique in that they are facing their defensive teammates and they can see the whole field from behind the plate. And, like any position on the field, it is important to understand how to develop catchers while keeping them safe. Coaches must be aware of how the pitching rules can impact catchers as well. For example, the Baseball Canada pitching rules state:

(6) Once a player assumes the position of pitcher, they cannot catch for the remainder of the day.

Many provinces have also established this rule. For these reasons, coaches will need to develop multiple catchers. Please be sure to check your provincial rule book regarding all pitching rules.



Characteristics of a Catcher

Coaches should consider developing multiple players as catchers. However, there are certain traits that may make some players better than others behind the plate.

Personality Traits of the Catcher

- 1 Has a willingness to get dirty.
- 2 Comfortable getting hit by the baseball on occasion.
- 3 Likes to be involved in the action.
- 4 Leadership skills and likes to take charge.
- 5 Physically able to sit in a squatting position for long periods of time.
- 6 Able to be comfortable wearing equipment.



7

MECHANICS OF CATCHING



Blocking Balls in the Dirt

Blocking balls in the dirt is a skill that all catchers must master. A pitcher who throws pitches in the dirt, either on purpose or not, will have confidence especially if he/she knows that the catcher has the ability to block pitches that a batter may chase.



»» Balls in the Dirt:

- Catchers must be sure to BLOCK the ball, not catch the ball. Blocking balls in the dirt prevents runners from advancing and helps to win games.

»» Ball in the Middle:

- Catchers can either drop straight to their knees or kick their feet back.
- Be sure knees are slightly wider than shoulder width on the ground, body is square to the pitcher.
- Keep arms tight to body and cover the 5 hole (between legs) with the catcher's mitt. With both palms facing forward, tuck throwing hand in behind glove and be sure to hide throwing hand fingers.
- Tuck the chin down into throat area to protect the neck.
- The chest should be cupped forward slightly so balls will hit the chest and be directed down to the ground in front of the catcher.
- The catcher must be ready to get to their feet quickly to make a play on a base runner.

»» Ball to the Left:

- Push with right foot so the body slides over, slightly angling back to the middle – the same blocking mechanics as a ball in the middle.

»» Ball to the Right:

- Push with left foot so the body slides over, slightly angling back to the middle – the same blocking mechanics as a ball in the middle.



Mechanics of Catching (continued)

»» Group Activity:

Get into groups of 3. Read the information on blocking balls in the dirt, above. One participant will be the coach who will demonstrate the skill and highlight the important aspects of blocking balls in the dirt. The second participant will be the athlete receiving instruction from the coach. The third participant will be the observer who will provide feedback on the coach's instructions.

▶ Task 9 Notes:





Mechanics of Catching (continued)

» Throwing to Second Base

▶ Task 10 Notes:





Mechanics of Catching (continued)

Optional Activity: (This activity can be used only if time permits)

Read the scenarios below and suggest at least 3 effective solutions that you feel will encourage positive reinforcement for the player in the situation.

Scenario 1: Becky has no problems when putting on the catcher's gear, she is fairly flexible and sets up in a position that looks really good considering her age and experience as a catcher. However, when a baseball is thrown at her while she is in the crouched position, she tends to elevate out of that position too soon and turns her head and body to avoid getting hit by the baseball. How can you help Becky in this situation?

Answer:

Handwriting lines for Scenario 1 answer.

Scenario 2: Ashton is a good athlete and probably your best pitcher. He is always asking to pitch and catch but you know the importance of rest to your athletes. You also realize that you need to develop more catchers on your team. What are some things you can do with Ashton to make sure you do not discourage him?

Answer:

Handwriting lines for Scenario 2 answer.



Mechanics of Catching (continued)

>> Scenario 3: Billy is a very timid athlete and you know that if he can gain confidence in the catching position, his self-esteem will increase. At this point in the season he has problems throwing the baseball and you are concerned that he could get injured because he also has trouble receiving the baseball while playing catch. You know it will take longer to develop his skills but you want to have everyone on your team catch at some point this year. What are some things that you can do with Billy to get him catching by the end of the year?

▶ Answer:

Lined writing area for the answer.





APPENDIX 1: Set and Stretch Positions



Set and Stretch

Pitchers that are just learning to pitch may want to begin with the easier starting position, referred to as the “Stretch”. This approach is used when pitchers are required to hold runners on base as well. Prior to delivering the ball to the batter, the pitcher will arrive at a “Set Position”, which requires stopping all movement from the shoulders down.

From the Stretch

- Have the pitcher turn sideways with their glove-side shoulder facing home plate. The pitcher will receive the catcher’s sign from this position.
- The pivot foot should be placed against the front edge of the pitcher’s plate. Remind the pitcher that they should not stand on top of the pitcher’s plate.
- The stride foot should be about shoulder width apart from the pivot foot and inline with the target.
- The glove hand should be at chest level, with the glove pointed upward to prevent base runners from seeing which grip is being used, and the throwing hand should be at the side along the pivot foot leg.



Reference Material



Notes:



Reference Material (continued)



Set Position

- After the pitcher receives the sign from the catcher, he/she will bring their hands together slightly in front of the chest, and grip the baseball while it is still in the glove.
- The set position should look comfortable with the elbows at the side, not flared, with the legs slightly bent, but in a good athletic position. With any runners on base, it is important that a pitcher stop all movement prior to delivering the pitch.
- At this point, the pitcher can deliver the ball to the batter, or throw to a base.
- With runners on base, pitchers should vary the length of their set position to prevent the runner from timing the pitcher in order to get a jump to steal a base.

Delivery

- The pitcher should focus on the catcher’s glove as the target.
- The pitcher will lift their stride foot and step forward inline with the target.
- At this point, all movement is the same as the full wind up position noted above.

Notes:

APPENDIX 2: Creating Confidence



Creating Confidence

Pitching effectively is strongly linked to the mental aspects of the game. Remember that a pitcher needs to have an understanding of the fundamentals of pitching mechanics, which will assist in building confidence. The following concepts are introductory to the mental aspects of pitching and lay the groundwork for the more complex concepts of pitching.



Confidence in Pitching

In order to understand these important concepts, here is some general information that should be conveyed to your pitchers.

Confidence

- Pitchers need to be comfortable in their approach.
- Pitchers need to have the proper mindset prior to pitching.
- Pitchers need to be dedicated to proper training.
- Pitchers need to be able to deal with failure.
- Coaches need to create an environment with the correct expectations.
- Coaches need to understand the concepts involved with Long Term Athlete Development and developing athletes.
- Coaches need to understand the age group and individuals they are instructing.
- Coaches need to conduct themselves as professionals.



APPENDIX 3: Throwing Quality Strikes

» Throwing “Quality Strikes”

Throwing quality strikes refers to a pitcher’s ability to throw the ball in the spot where the batter is less likely to hit the ball hard, or where the batter may not expect the pitch to be located at that particular time. The following chart identifies counts that can benefit the pitcher, or benefit the batter. As a coach, your understanding of these scenarios will assist you in teaching your pitchers what pitch and location should be used for the next pitch.



» Coaches should also be aware of the following physical and mental conditions that may affect a pitcher’s ability to pitch effectively:

- 1 Mechanical flaws causing inconsistent release points (physical aspect).
- 2 The pitcher is afraid to give up a hit (mental aspect).
- 3 The pitcher is trying to be too fine with their pitches (mental aspect).

» Pitch Counts

Early	Ahead	Behind
0 - 0	0 - 2	2 - 0
0 - 1	1 - 2	2 - 1
1 - 0	2 - 2	3 - 0
1 - 1	3 - 2	3 - 1



Reference Material (continued)

- 1** A higher percentage of outs occurs more often in the first 2 columns and more base hits occur in the last column.
- 2** The 1-1 count is the link between being ahead in the count or being behind in the count. Throw your best pitch that day in this count.
- 3** The 2-2 count is important because you are 1 pitch way from an out, but there is also a need to throw your best pitch. If the count goes to 3-2, this creates added pressure to throw a strike and avoid a walk to the batter.
- 4** The 3-2 count creates a situation where the pitch can often be predictable to the batter, based on the pitcher's performance to that point. Coaches should teach pitchers that game situations will dictate the best pitch in this situation. If there is an open base, or a weaker batter coming to the plate next, the pitcher may throw something that the batter does not expect. Conversely, if the game situation dictates that the pitcher must attempt to get this batter out, the pitch may be more predictable.
- 5** Reinforce that pitchers must try to stay ahead in the count.
- 6** Throw quality strikes early in the count. Remember, base hits occur when the pitcher cannot expand the strike zone and has to pitch more in the "hot" part of the strike zone. Expanding the strike zone occurs when the pitcher's control is good and he/she is throwing the ball slight up, down, left and right of the plate and the umpire is calling these pitches strikes.
- 7** Reinforce that if a pitcher does get behind in the count, the pitcher needs to focus and throw the pitch they want to throw, where they want to throw it! Take it one pitch at a time!



The Value of Pitching to Contact

Coaches should understand what counts are more effective for staying ahead in the game. An effective tool for determining how a pitcher has done over the course of time can be evaluated by calculating first pitch strikes. Following is an illustration of what a pitcher's results could be, based on their ability to pitch to contact and throw first-pitch strikes.

Pitcher	1st Pitch K's	# of batters faced	Hits	Walks
John	10	12	1	1
Matt	5	12	5	3
Gord	3	12	5	8



APPENDIX 4: Catching



Review of Proper Equipment

Equipment is a significant factor in preventing injuries for catchers. Catcher's equipment is also made to be light and flexible enough to allow movement and allow the catcher to make throws. However, some exposed areas, including the catcher's neck, knees, groin area, back of the head and arms are susceptible to injury. Coaches must teach catchers how to protect these areas during practice and emphasize the use of proper fitting equipment.



The following is a list of catcher's equipment.

Head Protection

Conventional Mask:

- There are two pieces including mask and helmet.
- In some cases they may be attached with a skull cap.
- Neck protector can be attached to the mask.



***Fit:** Must be snug without movement when throwing, and vision must not be hindered. This configuration may be awkward for younger players but older catchers tend to prefer this mask because it is a little lighter and easier to take off.*

Hockey Mask:

- A one-piece mask that also has an attachment on the back of the helmet to protect the back of the head.
- Comes to a point beyond the chin, which covers the neck area.
- Additional neck protection can be added if desired.



***Fit:** Must be snug without movement when throwing, and vision must not be hindered. Typically a little heavier but the one-piece construction is easier to put on, especially for younger catchers. This configuration is slightly more difficult to remove during play.*



Reference Material (continued)

Neck Protection

Neck Guard Attachment

- Choose the correct protection, depending on the type of protective helmet that the catcher is using.

Chest Protection

Chest Protector

- Chest protectors aid in the absorption of the impact of foul balls or balls bounced in the dirt.
- Some older versions have a piece that hangs lower between the legs. This groin protector may be bulky and inhibit younger players' movement.

Shoulder Attachment

- Newer chest protectors will have a Velcro shoulder protector that can be used on both sides. Older chest protectors have a permanent pad that goes over the throwing shoulder. The removable protector allows for usability by left- and right-handed catchers.

Fit: Must be snug without movement. Make sure all straps and buckles are not damaged and are fully operational.

Groin Protection

Protective Cup

- Necessary for all players that will catch. There is an adapted cup shape for catchers that provides additional protection.
- As noted above, some chest protectors also have an extension that provides limited protection to the groin area.

Fit: Must be snug without movement but not too tight as to cut off circulation.





Reference Material (continued)

Knee Protection

Shin-guards:

- All brands of shin-guards are similar but the movable joints can leave gaps in the knees if not fitted properly. Ensure guards fit on the knee and are close to the same length as the shin.

Knee Savers:

- These take the pressure off the knees and are attached to the straps of the shin guards. They are positioned on the back of leg so the catcher can sit on the pad as they sit in their crouch.

▶ **Fit:** Must be snug without movement and be the correct length.

Foot Protection

- There should be a flap on the front of the shin guard that covers the top of the foot.

Catcher's Glove

- There are many models on the market but the most important aspect to fitting any glove is to make sure that the catcher can handle the weight as well as be able to receive the baseball.

Thumb Protection

- An item that fits on the thumb inside a catcher's glove to help protect the thumb from getting bruised or hyperextended.

Wrist Protection

- An item that goes on the inside of the wrist. Usually used when athletes get a little older and start doing blocking drills.



APPENDIX 5: Personal reflection

STOP DOING

Lined writing area for 'STOP DOING' reflections

CONTINUE DOING

Lined writing area for 'CONTINUE DOING' reflections

START DOING

Lined writing area for 'START DOING' reflections



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