

Fastpitch Pitching

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Basics

Grip

For fastballs

Notes:

- usually want to see the “backwards C or Normal C” of the seams under hand/fingers
- Be sure to have a good grip; not just the fingers, but not all the way into the palm either
- Thumb should be on about the opposite seam
- The more seams gripped (for a fastball) helps with spin and snap



Snaps

- Foot positioning
 - around 45°; weight more on front leg
- Grip
 - most seams possible for fastball
- Shoulders/arm
 - angled, arm exposed & straight
- Wrist
 - Must be cocked in order to get proper snap
- Tips:
 - Focus only on wrist (no elbow or shoulder use)
 - Spin should be “perfect” (top-over-bottom) & abundant



T's

- Foot positioning
 - Completely sideways to 45° with feet (no step involved in this drill, though weight can shift and hip can “swivel”)
- Shoulders/arm
 - Perfect “T” position, long and loose all the way through
- Wrist
 - Must be cocked all the way through to snap
- Tips:
 - Do not let starting position creep above “T” level
 - Arm should never fall behind the back, and motion should pass right beside thigh
 - Focus on glove as well; should come down to glove-side thigh as pitching arm comes down to snap
 - If arm is straight after release, a snap likely did not occur
 - Make sure arm almost “curls” up (fingers to shoulder) after snap
 - Spin should still be relatively straight (top-over-bottom)

K's (Half Circle)

- Foot positioning
 - Same as T drill, but can now step with front foot/leg
 - *Most important to now drag the back foot, ending “knee-to-knee”
- Shoulder/arm
 - Glove pointed at catcher, pitching arm straight up with some “slack”
 - (hence the K-position)
 - Shoulder/bicep should be close to ear to start
- Wrist
 - Wrist is still cocked, all the way through to snap
- Tips:
 - *Be sure arm (half circle) does not fall behind the back!
 - It should start close to the ear and pass right alongside the thigh
 - Focus points: long loose arm, not falling behind back, snap, glove work, and ending tall & knee-to-knee

Good mechanics at all times is crucial!* bad habits will snowball



“K” Positioning

$\frac{3}{4}$ Circle

- Foot positioning
 - All exactly the same as K-drill
- Shoulder/arm
 - Glove and arm both start pointed at catcher
 - * be sure arm is long & loose; arm circle stays tight to ear, passes alongside thigh, and does not fall behind the back
- Wrist
 - Does not start cocked, but becomes somewhat cocked around K position
- Tips:
 - Focus on “perfect” arm circle, good snap, glove work, & ending tall, knee-to-knee



Full Motion

- Foot positioning to start on mound
 - (for righties) heel of right foot on the front of the mound, toes of left foot on back of the mound, feet about shoulder width or slightly further apart

Teaching in 5-step process helps beginner pitchers understand what their motion should resemble when done step-by-step

1. Foot positioning mentioned above, back foot heel up, weight mainly on front leg, both hands together (already in proper grip)
2. Rock back, planting the left foot and bringing the right foot up on heel only, and swinging both arms back (not to much bend at waist, be sure to keep chest up)
 - be sure to have some bend in the knees for takeoff
3. Left leg/knee drives up and out along with glove and pitching arm/ball
 - everything should be aimed directly towards home plate; be sure pitcher can hold their balance in this position

Cont.:

4. Left lands out in front, in line with catcher, toes around a 45 degree angle, glove stays pointed towards catcher, pitching arm continues up and around (landing in a general X-position with body)

- be sure proper alignment is achieved; arm should not fall behind back when landing in the X-position; wrist should now be cocked in order to achieve snap at the end. be sure pitching arm goes up and over from step 3 to step 4; some pitchers want to send their arm straight out from their body to achieve the X-position, but it must go up/over/around (working for the “perfect circle”)

5. Finish/follow through; be sure snap occurs and generally right alongside the thigh; arm should almost curl up to shoulder after snap occurs; strong finish with lower half (ending knee to knee, hips slightly finishing slightly angled)

Basic Common Problems:

- No snap at the end of the pitch (push through)
- Arm circle not straight
 - Bent at the elbow
 - Arm moves behind (overextension on back side of circle)
 - **Needs Immediate Correction** -> could cause future arm problems
- Back foot left behind
- Knees bent at the end of pitch
- Front should pull away from catcher too soon
 - Glove goes behind back or doesn't come down at all
 - Glove and pitching arm should be on same timing
 - Will pull arm circle
- Hips don't get all the way open (4 position)

Drills for Fixes (Issues)

Correcting/Working on the Arm Circle

Wall circles

- Have pitcher stand close to wall or more-so solid surface (just a few inches off); feet aligned as they would be in the X-position; create full arm circles (moving hips and shoulders as they should during a full pitch). Goal is to keep the ball on the wall! (until around snap area)
 - They will need to be just close enough to the wall so their arm can fit nicely between the wall and their thigh(s); this will simulate how their hips and shoulders should move, but also how their arm circle should be aligned while the rest of their body moves as well



Arm Speed/Speed Circles

- Many pitchers, when they begin learning, are so focused on how to move their body parts correctly that they end up doing it much too slowly even after they've gotten the motion down pat
- Have pitcher down on one knee (throwing side knee) with other leg extended and slightly off to the side, not pointed directly at the plate.
 - This drill requires another person right beside the pitcher to hand her balls
- Pitcher will be close to a net, or really anything to throw to so that the ball will not come back at her. She will do a full arm circle and snap into the net. As soon as she releases the ball, she will take another out of the hand of the feeder and do another arm circle and release, and so on, and so on.
 - This is essentially a rapid fire drill, so everything must be done FAST, no slowing down/or pausing in between pitches.
 - Be sure your pitcher's arm circle is still smooth, long, not failing behind the rest of her body, and she has a long arm as her snap/release
- Again, good mechanics should almost always be stressed through all drills



Accelerator/Arm Speed, Cont.:

- There is a tool available, usually called an accelerator. It's got a softball attached to some rope attached to a weight of some sort.
 - This is great for any occasion because the pitcher is not actually throwing anything, and therefore does not need a catcher.
- However, for some younger pitchers, beginners, or just for anyone who wants to see longer (distance) results, there is a tool you can make at home.
- Take a large (preferably men's) tube sock, stick a softball into the bottom, and tie a knot towards the top of the sock.
 - Now you've got the same tool that you can throw to see some results, and it likely costs less.
- Have pitcher position feet in a generally comfortable X-position. They will make full arm circles (at least two or three) before releasing the ball to their catcher.
 - Do this a normal distance, just because the tool will really fly.
 - This is also a good tester of proper arm circle. If the tool does not go in a general straight direction, the pitcher's arm circle was likely off.
- With this drill, be sure the arm circle is fast; the tool should always be at full extension as to "pull the arm" long and around the circle quickly



OR



Bringing all the Weight and Power Through/Finishing

Airplane Drill

- This drill is primarily about the starting position and then the finish.
- Have pitcher start in X-position or so. From here, they will put just about all of the weight on their front leg, leaving just their toe(s) of the back foot to touch the ground.
 - Be sure to make sure they don't creep their back foot closer to their front foot to be more comfortable. This should not really be a comfortable drill in terms of the starting position.
- Their arms will be in the X-position or so and go to release point.
- The goal of this drill is to accentuate the finish. They should end tall, knee-to-knee and really be squeezing to get everything through and together at the end.
- A problem with a lot of new pitchers is they leave some weight behind, which causes a loss of speed and power.

Drills for Power & Stride

Important Notes:

- These drills for power and stride should really only be implemented after your pitcher(s) have correct form and a proper arm circle and can throw strikes very often.
 - Though sometimes it may help to get a bit further off the mound that simply a small step ...
- Just remember, form is EVERYTHING for young beginning pitchers

Flamingo Drill (for distance/stride)

- Have pitcher start on the mound, with their back foot up and knee bent (left leg off the ground/bent for righties)
- Pitcher should have ball and hand in the glove and bring the knee of the hanging leg up and out in front (thigh should be parallel to the floor and knee at a 90° angle)
- Then pitcher will swing leg and arms back (be sure everything in straight/in line; chest stays up on swing back; launch leg is bent; in a good take-off position)
- From here, she will pitch as usual
- The goal is to get that knee up and out in order to “pull” the rest of the body towards to catcher.
- Be sure the pitcher’s back leg DRAGS her back foot and finishes tall and tight and knee-to-knee.
 - If both feet end up off the ground at the same time, it is an illegal pitch!



Lunge to pitch (for stride/distance)

- Pitcher must start behind the mound (far enough to lunge twice and on the second lunge, the correct foot should land properly on the front of the mound)
- For righties, lunge with left leg first, then right leg and land with right foot properly on the front of the mound
- Keep the long distance between legs/feet and pitch from this position
 - The goal here is to exaggerate the launch/take-off position. This drill will be difficult for young pitchers as it should put a lot of stress on the lower half.
- Again, shoot for lengthy stride with the back foot dragging; finishing tight, tall, and knee-to-knee





Pitching with launch tool
or Bosu ball
(For mound push-off)

Push-up to Pitch

- Have pitcher lay on stomach with ball just off the throwing shoulder
- Pitcher will then “push-up” and drive correct knee straight up and under throwing shoulder
- Be sure tummy stays tight so the body rises all at once (do not “inch-worm” you body upwards), and knee drives straight and up under shoulder (not out and around)
- Your pitcher should essentially be in an exaggerated sprinter’s starter position
- Pitch from this position!



Walk-throughs/Long Toss

(this drill can be done at the early stages of pitching, but pitcher(s) should still have proper form before they move on to this (these) drill(s))

- Start 2-3 steps behind the mound.
- Starting with the glove foot, take two big steps forward.
- The second step is the stride to throw.
- Make sure the arm is lengthened out; this drill should be done at 50 – 75% of what they can throw.
- After 3 – 5 pitches in one spot, move back five steps.
- Repeat last step until the catcher can no longer be reached, with a good amount of arc on the pitch.
- Great drill for warming up before a game when there is sufficient space.

New Pitches!

Notes:

- There are several ways to throw each pitch.
 - Different grips and different ways to release the pitch.
- It is imperative that your pitcher become consistent with a fastball before learning other pitches!
 - This means being able to hit spots a majority of the time and throwing around 75% strikes.
- It is better to one to two excellent pitches than 3-4+ half-assed pitches that are uncontrollable or look similar to each other.

Start with a change-up...

- There are *many* different ways to throw a change-up
- For now, we'll focus on the 'flip change'
- This is a good change up to teach first; when it is executed correctly, the player will not have to slow down her body in order to take speed off of this pitch (deceptive).
- The pitcher will quite literally 'flip' the ball to the catcher
 - Back of the hand will be facing the catcher on release
 - Wrist will flip the ball forward



Change-up snaps

- The flip change will have the same grip as out fastball
 - Fingers across the four seams
 - Thumb on the opposite side of the ball
- Start with the same body position as fastball snaps EXCEPT...
- The back of the hand will face the catcher
- Instead of a flexed wrist, the wrist is now relaxed
- Fingers will flip up slightly as the hand follows around the hips
 - Think of the motion of pulling a lap seatbelt across
 - Elbow should bend
- Player should finish with her pinky above her thumb and her hand near the front hip
- Follow this through T's and K's

Change-up full

- The most important thing when learning to throw a flip change is making sure the player “flips” her hand at the top of the circle
- When she passes the 12 o’clock position with her hand, have her rotate her hand to the bottom of the ball
 - Her thumb will rotate away from the body
 - This ensures that the fingers will be in front of the ball at release
- Body motion should stay the same as the fastball with the release variation
- Take it really slow to start out with to ensure your player feels the “flip” motion at the top of her pitching circle

Thanks for Your Time!

- We really enjoyed going through all of this with you guys.
- Hopefully we showed you some things you didn't know and now, not only should you know how to do the basics and the more advanced drills, but you now may know how they should look on your pitchers and how to teach them properly as well!
- We are always willing to help if you ever have any questions!

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