

Coaching Introduction

What is our purpose as coaches in youth baseball? Most players have only limited foundations into the fundamentals of throwing, hitting, fielding and catching. We as coaches have to begin building a foundation on which these young people can build and develop good baseball skills.

The objective at all age levels in youth baseball is to provide basic, easy to follow fundamentals to allow the child to develop and learn the skills necessary to complete a task. We the coaches must create an environment that will allow the players to concentrate on single skills at a time, being extremely careful not to allow ourselves to bombard them with too much information at any one time.

The earlier we start teaching our players the proper way to execute skills, the earlier the players will form good, long lasting habits. We must spend our time helping these children learn one skill at a time and after that skill has been learned moving on to the next sequence in the skill acquisition of pitching and or catching.

In this manual you will find what affects learning. What we as coaches need to bring to the learning environment, what skills should be taught and hopefully conquered at each level, and finally the drills that will help the players learn the skills essential to pitching and catching.

At each level we should set some skill goals for the players to achieve and provide an environment in which they can practice and perfect those skills. By the end of the season you coaches would receive the biggest reward of all and that would be, seeing these young players grow up with good sound fundamental skills and techniques that will help them set a solid foundation for them to succeed in the future.

Improvement can be measured by reaching small goals and is the best motivating factor in athletics. Successful execution is one of the best and most effective forms of motivation. That does not mean they will get a hit every time or threw a perfect pitch or throw; it means they executed the skill properly. An athlete has to learn to get the feel of a good throw or a well hit ball. That feeling produces satisfaction and pleasure, making them want to reproduce it over and over again.

Not everyone can and will be great players, but everyone should improve- *Walter Alston*

Getting the Most Out of Our Players

What affects Performance

- 1) Mechanics
- 2) Natural Ability
- 3) Desire

There is a time and place for mechanics to be taught and a time when natural ability has to take over. When teaching your players, whose desire takes over when you are trying to teach and they are trying to learn - theirs or yours. If it is not theirs, then whatever learning takes place will be short term. Without their own desire, there is no commitment.

Shaping Behavior-Shape the behavior that you want to have reproduced by rewarding the behavior that is closest for what you are looking for. If they swing 100% then let them keep swinging. If they stop swinging at 100% then make them stop and get out of the cage. Mold that behavior you want them to have for the game.

Success-oriented athletes vs. Failure-oriented athletes

Success oriented-looks at the right things accomplished and becomes confident and wants the chance to perform.

Failure oriented-looks at the bad things performed and becomes full of self-doubt and is very vulnerable and easily defeated.

**Provide an environment that promotes success-oriented thoughts.

Player Ingredients

Pride-In who they are and in what they do.

Patience-Need to have it because without it frustration will take over and no learning can take place.

Dedication-The harder you play the more you can accomplish.

Coaches Ingredients

- 1) Encouragement.
- 2) Confidence-In yourself and in your players. If you believe it they will believe it easier.
- 3) Teach them to think for themselves. They have to react to what they see, not to what you say during a game.

SKILL DIAGNOSING, PROBLEMS AND FLAWS

What interferes with learning?

1. Not knowing any better, not having the knowledge of what they are trying to do.
2. Not understanding what the feeling is or how the skill is performed.
3. Old habits get in the way, mentally and physically.
4. Result oriented thought process, I got a hit so I must be doing it right.
5. Attention span is short and they want results now.

Responsibilities as Coaches.

1. Use every form of learning available.
 - A. Verbal
 - B. Visual
 - C. Kinesthetic
2. Be firm in achieving 21 correct times in a row.
3. Remove results when possible so they can concentrate on the skill.
4. Break the monotony mold and make it fun.

DIAGNOSING A PROBLEM

1. You see something wrong.
2. What are they doing wrong? Find the problem.
3. Explain what they are doing wrong. Audio
4. Show them what they are doing wrong. Visual
5. Get them to feel what they are doing wrong. Kinesthetic
How do you get them to feel the between correct and incorrect?
 - A. Provide the drills
 - B. Slow motion
 - C. Dry runs
 - D. Praise when you see them do it right
 - E. After they have done it right, ask them to do it wrong.
This gives them the chance to feel the difference.
6. Achieve 21 times in a row. Make it a game and make it fun.
 - A. You vs. Me
 - B. Goal setting. Set one and try to attain it.
7. Work on one problem at a time
8. Target players with similar problems and have them do drills together.
9. Teach the players as if they know nothing, instead of correcting.

PITCHING PROGRESSION **PRE-SEASON**

These guidelines are dependent on several factors that can influence a coach's decision of when and how much they should allow a pitcher throw. The pitcher's mechanics, weather and proper warm-up are all going to effect how much a pitcher should or can throw on any given day or game situation.

First, the coach needs to stress with each of their pitchers the use of proper mechanics. If the pitcher does not have the proper mechanics the risk are greatly increased and the effectiveness of following these guidelines will not help decrease the risk of injury to the arm.

Secondly, weather is another factor that must be considered when evaluating when and how much a pitcher should throw. Cold, damp, moist conditions are tougher on a pitcher to throw in. Windy conditions can also influence a pitcher's recover rate. If a pitcher throws in those conditions they should be allowed an extra day to recover.

Lastly, proper warm-up will definitely influence what happens to a pitchers arm and is a factor that needs to be properly monitored. Make sure the pitcher's arm and legs are warm before pitching competitively. The pitcher should jog before throwing and always throw easily, some 20 to 30 throws, before starting the game, pitch count or any type of pitching drills.

Preliminary work and preventive maintenance of the arm should include the following ingredients.

The pitcher should stretch the arm muscles and shoulder muscles before and after they throw. This will allow the muscles to stretch out prior to throwing and will help them heal quicker after throwing, removing some of the stiffness. The two days after throwing the pitcher should go through a stretching program with the throwing arm to help remove stiffness and elongate the muscles again.

The pitcher should throw long toss at least two days a week and if the arm feels good a third day should be allowed. Long toss should start from 60 feet and after the pitchers are loose start to move back 3 or 4 steps back after each throw until they reach 125 to 130 feet apart (distance approximately from home to second base on their size of field). Don't try and throw the ball in a straight line but should have a slight arc in the throw. If the ball bounces it is better than allowing the ball to be thrown rainbow fashion to get it there. Over time and practice, the arm strength will improve and the throw will become stronger. Throw from this distance approximately 10 throws.

At the age of around 11 and on the pitcher should be encouraged to ice their arm after every time they pitch. They should ice their arm for a period of 10 to 15 minutes. Place an ice bag on the shoulder region and another on the outside of the upper arm. This cools the arm down and allows for healing and recovery to speed up and reduce the risk of future injuries.

Lastly the pitcher should begin wearing long sleeve shirt during a game and also at night while they sleep. This will keep their arm warm and help reduce the chance of getting arm soreness.

Week 1 = The pitcher should perform pitching drills, working on the proper mechanics of the throw and should only be allowed to throw more than 20 pitches off the mound. The drills could be performed everyday, throwing approximately 10-15 throws for each drill they perform. However, throwing off the mound should never occur more than three days in a row followed by a day of rest. The total throw content after warm-up, should not exceed 60 throws.

Week 2 = The pitchers pitch count can increase to 30 pitches each time they throw off the mound. Drills should still be emphasized and done at each practice. The pitch count for the drills and off the mound should not exceed 75.

Week 3 = The pitch count should climb up to 40 to 45 pitches each time they throw off the mound. The drills for throwing mechanics should never be forgotten but focus the particular drills that the pitcher needs to work on as the focus. For example if a pitcher has trouble stepping in a straight line focus on the drills that allow them to work mainly on the aspect.

Week 4/Start of the Season = By the beginning of the season your pitchers should be up to the pitch counts allowed by the league rules and able to be strong enough to handle the pitching load. Once the season begins don't forget to take some time to continue to work on those mechanics that will allow that pitcher to improve their mechanics.

Pitching Mechanics

Stay relaxed and keep some rhythm. Deep breath before each pitch. Let the shoulders be down and relaxed showing the neck.

Keep shoulders on top of hips. When throwing from wind-up keep shoulders on top of hips.

Use hip flexors to lift stride leg.

Bend pivot leg slightly to drop hips and get power prior to delivery.

(Ex. Try jumping without bending knees.)

Control the sinking of the hips (don't crouch) and keep a nice controlled balance with some rhythm (no stops). BALANCE

Keep weight on inside of pivot foot. This keeps weight on top of hips.

At the balance position the hands should be together under the chin, elbows down and relaxed, lead leg bent at the knee with the thigh parallel with the ground and the toe of the foot relaxed pointed down, waist is bent forward slightly so the shoulders are in front of the hips.

On the drive to the plate the hands and arms move down and separate as the lead leg begins to move down and forward.

Throwing arm moves back and hand stays on top of the ball until ball clears the top of the head. (Ball below hand, knuckles to the sky) Never allow the throwing arm to go straight, should have a slight bend at the elbow.

Glove moves forward and out pointing toward the catcher at head height. At this point the arms in mirror position of each other.

Use all three joints of the arm to deliver the baseball.

Shoulder-Shoulder brings arm down and back up and over like a swimming stroke.

Slap high five. Spike the volleyball. Dunk the basketball ball.

Elbow-Once the hand and ball clear the head, the elbow should move forward ahead of the ball. The more the elbow can get in front of the hand/ball the more explosion the arm will have.

Wrist-Finish the throw with the wrist completing the dunk, like a basketball.

Power of the delivery. Drive off the back leg, don't swing the front leg. (Jump ball)

Landing foot lands in straight line with the catcher, foot slightly turned in.

Front side stays closed during delivery. Shoulder moves forward and down before out. (Cartwheel action)

On follow through the glove elbow points to the sky, back heel points to the sky and should go higher than the hips and chest over the knee on follow through.

Pitch Grips

Fastball-Release with a thick wrist. Grip ball along the seams for more movement and across the seams for a less movement.

Breaking Pitch-Don't even worry or begin to teach this pitch at this stage. Believe me they are not ready physically or mentally.

Change Up-Release with a thick wrist and don't accelerate the arm on release. Don't slow the body down, just don't accelerate the arm at out in front.

Three finger palm ball-The fingers are placed together on top of ball

Slip Pitch- Ball is held by the thumb and third (ring) finger. The index and middle finger are held loosely on the ball. Upon release the two fingers will come off ball and the ball will slip out of the hand on release through the gap between the thumb and the ring finger. Ball should tumble downward.

Setting Pitching Guidelines & Standards

Progress slowly. Work on one phase or skill at a time.

Work up to a maximum pitch count slowly. Do a weekly progression. 30-1st week, 40-2nd week

Set up a rotation schedule so pitchers can have a complete day off of throwing after 3 or 4 days in a row of throwing. Remember throwing from shortstop is not a day off

Set an upper limit of the number of pitches your pitcher should throw over the course of a practice, game or week.

Set goals for the pitcher to shoot for while throwing in the bullpen. 7 out of 10 pitches is a great goal.

1 pitch inside 1 pitch outside, 2 pitches inside 2 pitches outside.

Pitching Philosophies

The pitcher must always be in control of the game and themselves. Check their breathing.

Throw strikes and the odds are in the pitchers favor. Most hitters will make an out 7 out of 10 times when they make contact.

For a hitter who is walked has a 100% chance of reaching 1st base. Throw strikes.

Confidence is the key. 90% of pitching is to believe they can do it.

First pitch is a ground ball strike. The ball should be thrown low in the strike zone and if the hitter takes it, strike, and if they make contact, they hit it on the ground.

The first two of three pitches must be strikes. Pitcher will always be ahead in the count and will always have the advantage.

Keep a hitter who is a .200 hitter a .200 hitter by staying ahead in the count. When you are down in the count a hitter's average increases.

Pitching Drills

Form Throw-T Balance, Chest over Bench

The pitcher will throw an imaginary pitch from the wind-up or stretch position. After the pitcher throws the pitch they will pick their back pivot leg (leg that pushed off the rubber) to where it is parallel with the ground. The body position with the leg extended back resembles the letter "T" and the pitcher will hold that position the specified time. This drill helps the pitcher with balance on the follow through and help to emphasize the importance of the back up driving off the rubber and lifting up after release allowing the body weight to go with the pitch.

Throwing Arm to Glove

In this drill the pitcher will get into the stride position, with the feet placed short of their normal landing stride position on an actual pitch. The glove arm and throwing arm should be up slightly above shoulder level (hands up in a surrender position), weight slightly forward on the balls of the feet, shoulders leaning slightly in front of the hips and head turned to the throwing target. The pitcher will throw the ball at a medium speed, keeping the glove stationary and the throwing arm moving forward to throw the ball over the glove arm. The result of the throw resembles a person dunking a ball over the glove arm. This drill helps teach the pitcher the importance of keeping the front glove shoulder in and the throwing arm moving loose from the shoulder joint. The throw should not occur with the body carrying the throwing arm to the release point.

One Knee Break & Throw

The pitcher will be doing this drill with their throwing knee on the ground and the stride foot out toward the target, in a straight line between the knee and the throwing target. The toe of the stride leg should be pointed at the target with the knee of the stride leg bent out slightly more than 90 degrees. The glove shoulder should be facing the target and the hands together at the chest. The hands will separate; the throwing hand will move down, back and up while the glove arm moves down, forward and up. The throwing arm will continue up and over, throwing the ball to the target and the glove will come down into the arm pit, with the glove elbow finishing pointed to the sky. This drill isolates the upper body so the pitcher can concentrate on the arm movement exclusively.

Stride Position-Follow Through-Bench Drill

The pitcher will stand with their feet just short of their regular stride position and remain stationary. The glove shoulder is facing the target and the hands are together at the chest. The pitcher will shift their weight onto the back, pivot leg, bending it slightly to allow the weight shift to occur. The pitcher will then drive the weight forward by extending the pivot leg out, driving the hips forward. During the weight shift forward the hands will separate; the throwing hand will move down, back and up while the glove arm moves down, forward and up at the same time. The throwing arm will continue up and over, throwing the ball to the target and the glove will come down into the arm pit, with the glove elbow finishing pointed to the sky and the chest down over the stride knee. After release the back pivot foot should come up and around, landing on the ground shoulder width apart from the stride foot, getting the pitcher into the proper ready position to field a ball. Can place a bench for them to straddle on their finish.

Pivot Leg Chair Drill-Follow Thru

The pitcher will place their pivot foot on a chair that is placed behind the pitcher in a straight line with the pitcher and the throwing target. The pivot leg should be placed on the chair with the weight of the body on the stride leg. The pitcher will turn so that the glove shoulder is facing the target and the hands are together at the chest. The pitcher will rock the weight back onto the pivot foot slightly and then transfer the weight onto the stride leg. During the weight shift forward, the hands will separate; the throwing hand will move down, back and up while the glove arm moves down, forward and up at the same time. The throwing arm will continue up and over, throwing the ball to the target, the glove will come down into the arm pit with the glove elbow finishing pointed to the sky and the chest down over the stride knee. After release the back pivot foot should come up and around, landing on the ground shoulder width apart from the stride foot, getting the pitcher into the proper ready position to field a ball.

Stride Leg Chair Drill-Break & Throw

The pitcher will stand in the stretch position with the glove shoulder pointed to the target. A chair is placed in front of the pitcher so that they can lift the stride leg up and move the foot forward (like taking a step to walk forward) and place it on the edge of the chair. The pitcher will then lift the foot off the chair, using the hip flexor muscle and then drive the weight forward toward the throwing target with the pivot leg, taking the stride foot in a straight line to the target. When the stride leg lands the arms should be up and in the throwing position. The throwing arm will continue up and over releasing the ball to the target and executing the proper follow through after release.

Stretch Progression-Balance

The pitcher will put their feet shoulder width apart with the arms down at each side of the body and the glove shoulder facing the throwing target. The pitcher will move their feet to inside shoulder width while bending the elbows and putting the hands together at the chest and stopping. The pitcher will then lift the stride leg up so that the thigh is parallel with the ground, the knee is bent and the foot is under the knee, foot relaxed with the toe below the heel. This is the balance power position and the pitcher will hold this for the specified time. The coach should check to make sure; the shoulders are slightly in front of the hips, weight on the front (chest) half of the body, body is stacked (legs, hips, shoulders, head) and not leaning any direction. Good drill to teach the pitcher how to lift the leg into the balance position by using the hip flexor muscle and not the body weight shift or lean back.

Wind-Up Progression-Rocker, Pivot

The pitcher will stand on the rubber with both feet, placing the front of both feet over the leading edge of the rubber so that the toes are in contact with the ground. The first movement is with the stride (glove) foot taking a small step back at a 45 degree angle. The step should be small and the weight shift of the upper body should be minimal. The shoulders should stay in front of the hips when the step is finished. The pitchers weight should transfer to the stride foot enough to allow the pivot foot to turn in front of the rubber. When finished the pivot foot should be turned with the inside of the ankle facing the throwing target and next to the leading edge of the pitching rubber. This drill helps the pitcher feel and understand the weight shift necessary for the pivot foot to turn into the proper throwing position.

Wind-Up Progression-Break & Throw

The pivot leg becomes flexed slightly (slight bend) and the weight is driven from the pivot leg toward the throwing target. The stride leg, hip and glove shoulder should all move to the plate together, while the hands separate and the arms move into the throwing position. When the stride foot lands the throwing arm should be up, ready to throw the ball to the throwing target. The throwing arm will continue up and over, throwing the ball to the target, the glove will come down into the arm pit with the glove elbow finishing pointed to the sky and the chest down over the stride knee. After release the back pivot foot should come up and around, landing on the ground shoulder width apart from the stride foot, getting the pitcher into the proper ready position to field a ball.

Fence in Front Throw

This drill is designed to teach the pitcher to get their arm up and over the shoulder on the throw and not allow the elbow to drop or the body to carry the arm to the release point. The pitcher will stand in the stretch position with the glove shoulder facing the throwing target with a fence, screen or other barrier that is at least 6 foot tall. The pitcher should place themselves approximately two foot lengths away from the fence, which will allow the arm to move through the throwing motion properly. By standing too close to the fence the pitcher would be forced to get the arm too high in the delivery of the pitch. The pitcher will perform a normal throw from the stretch position, working on all the proper mechanics throughout the throw.

Fence Behind Throw

This drill is designed to teach the pitcher to get their arm back into the proper arm circle, directly back, not allowing the arm to move behind the back. The pitcher will stand in the stretch position with the glove shoulder facing the throwing target with a fence, screen or other barrier that is at least 6 foot tall. The pitcher should place themselves approximately half of a foot length away from the fence, which will allow the arm to move directly back in the throwing motion, but will prevent them from moving it further behind. The pitcher will perform a normal throw from the stretch position, working on all the proper mechanics throughout the throw.

Towel Drill-Balance Position

In this drill the pitcher will have a towel in their throwing hand instead of a baseball. The pitcher will perform the drill from the balance position, performing all the proper mechanics to throw the baseball. After holding the balance position for 3 to 5 seconds the pitcher will drive off the pivot leg, taking the stride leg straight to the plate. When the throwing arm comes up and over to get to the release point the pitcher will explode the throwing arm forward in the proper arm slot, creating a whip with the towel. This drill helps the pitcher feel the force it takes to throw the ball with some velocity. The towel will whip through the air and create a loud noise.

Ball Flips

This drill can be done with the pitcher going from the stretch or wind-up position. The coach will stand directly behind the pitcher in a straight line with the throwing target. The pitcher will simply go through the proper mechanics of either the stretch or wind-up and as they land the stride leg and the arms are moving down and then up, the pitcher will flip the ball back to the coach while looking at the throwing target. The ball should leave the pitcher's hand and land in the coach's hands. This drill is designed to give the pitcher the feel and muscle memory of where the arm should be going when it is coming back and up for the delivery. If the ball goes to either side of the coach the arm is traveling in the wrong path back and needs to be adjusted so the ball will go directly to the coach.

Bull Pen-Best of 7 out of 10

After warming the body and arm up properly the pitcher will throw pitch 10 pitches from the pitchers mound. The goal for the pitcher is to throw 7 out of 10 pitches for strikes.

Bull Pen-Up/Down-1 Pitch

The goal for the pitcher is to throw one pitch up and the next pitch up in the strike zone.

Bull Pen-Up/Down-2 Pitches

The goal for the pitcher is to throw 2 pitches in a row down and then 2 pitches in a row up in the strike zone.

Groundballs

The coach will hit a variety of ground balls and the pitcher will make the throw to the base the coach calls out to throw to first, second, third and home plate.

Bunts

The coach will hit a variety of slow rollers and bunts and the pitcher will make the throw to the base. The coach will tell the pitcher what base to throw to before hitting the ball.

Cover Home

The pitcher will throw a pitch over the head of the coach who is standing at home plate. The pitcher will then run to home plate to cover the plate for a throw from the coach who is retrieving the errant throw. The pitcher should have the left foot on the foul side of the 3rd baseline and the right foot in fair territory. They should have the knees flexed and the shoulders turned so they are square to where the coach is throwing the ball from. After making the catch the pitcher should turn the shoulders to square up with the baseline and lower the glove with the ball to the ground, letting the runner slide into the glove for the out.

Cover 1st

The pitcher can either throw a pitch to home plate or just get in the fielding position on the mound ready to react to the ball hit by the coach. The coach will hit a ground ball to the first base side of the infield and the pitcher will run over and try to field the ball. If they don't field it, they continue over and down the baseline to take the throw from the first baseman, by getting to first base. This drill is designed to get the pitcher to cover first on all balls to the first base side of the infield.

Back up-Home

The pitcher can either throw a pitch to home plate or just get in the fielding position on the mound ready to react to the ball hit by the coach. The coach will hit a fly ball to the outfield and the pitcher will run over the third baseline and get deep behind home plate in a direct line with where the ball was hit. This drill teaches the pitcher where and how to back up home plate on a throw from the outfield. The pitcher should always run to the third base side of home plate when backing up home plate just in case the throw is going to go to third instead. The pitcher is closer to third base if they run to that side of the field when backing up plays at home plate.

Catching

Progression Skills-One of the hardest things for a young catcher to master is staying balanced while receiving a pitch. Once a player learns the proper mechanics of giving a sign and the receiving position, provide the drills necessary for them to gain the balance needed to be a catcher. Without the balance the catcher won't be able to accomplish any of the tasks a catcher must perform with much success. After the balance is mastered they will be able to receive a pitch much better which is the next most important skill. It's the skill they will have to do the most. Blocking the ball, picking up bunts and throwing to second are all skills that should be worked on after the catcher is comfortable with receiving.

Mechanics

Give a Sign

1. Pinch knees
2. Glove below knee
3. Chest up knees out
4. Hand deep in crotch, not below

Receiving Position

1. Feet shoulder width apart and slightly staggered (Glove foot slightly ahead of the throwing foot)
2. Shoulders squared to the pitcher. Knees level with each other
3. Butt off the heels
4. Chest forward so shoulders are out, not up, knees in
5. Glove out, elbow on outside of knee. Elbow at 90°
6. Hand behind butt or knee
7. Should be arms length away from hitter

Receiving and Framing

1. Catch ball with elbow outside of knee unless ball goes over midpoint of your body. This will avoid getting handcuffed.
2. As the ball is caught give with it. Elbow goes from 45° to 90°
3. Balls to the left/right away sway the body so that the chest is behind the ball

Framing expands the strike zone to make the borderline pitches strikes

1. Catch the ball by turning the glove so the wrist is behind the baseball
2. Ball below your knees frame up (twist glove over)
3. Ball at or above your face turn down
4. Balls to the glove side frame ball so that it faces the strike zone
5. Balls to the throwing side move ball to the strike zone by moving the ball in front of the wrist not behind the wrist.

Blocking the Ball

1. Balls down the middle
 - a. Release the feet and place the knees where the feet were
 - b. Glove on the ground and between the legs
 - c. Hand behind the glove
 - d. Shoulders forward and cupped
 - e. Head down. Chin to the chest
2. Balls to the left or right
 - a. Step to the ball with the foot
 - b. Drive opposite knee to the ground toward the heel of the foot which stepped
 - c. Get chest behind the ball with shoulders square
 - d. Glove on the ground and between the foot and the knee
 - e. Get Cobra, throw elbows out, shoulders forward and bow chest

Catcher Drills

Stance-N-Hold

The player will get in the proper receiving position and hold that position for the specified length of time. Proper position should be knees bent, thighs parallel with the ground and spread apart, not further than shoulder width. The toes should be facing forward, heels up off the ground, weight on the balls of the feet and the butt down but not resting on the heels. The chest should be leaning forward and the knees pulled back so that the shoulders are stacked above the knees. The glove arm should be bent slightly, getting the glove out in front of the body and the throwing hand held behind the back.

Balance the Boat-Sign to Receive

The catcher will get down in the catcher's position to give the sign to the pitcher. Proper position should be knees bent, thighs parallel with the ground and pinched inward to where they are inside shoulder width. The toes should be facing forward, heels up off the ground, weight on the balls of the feet and the butt down resting on the calves. The chest should be up and the knees forward so that the shoulders and chest are behind the knees. The glove should be held on the outside of the leg, toward the ground to protect the sign from being seen by the third base coach. The throwing arm should be resting on the hip with the wrist bent down and the throwing hand held close to the crotch, so that fingers will only be visible to the pitcher. After giving a sign the coach will command the catcher to get in receiving position. Proper receiving position should be knees bent and spread apart not further than shoulder width. The toes should be facing forward, heels up off the ground, weight on the balls of the feet and the butt down but not resting on the heels. The chest should be leaning forward and the knees pulled back so that the shoulders are stacked above the knees. The glove arm should be bent slightly, placing the glove out in front of the body and the throwing hand held behind the back. The coach will say the commands: sign, receive, sign receive in different time intervals while the catcher works on the balance and strength of being in the catcher's stance.

Elevators

The catcher will stand in front of the coach at the proper distance with their feet shoulder width apart and their legs straight. The coach will then throw a ball down to the catcher's knees and they will bend down and catch the ball in the catcher's receiving position. After catching the ball the catcher will stand up and throw the ball back without stepping. This will be repeated for the duration of the drill. Good drill to build up leg strength specific for the catching position.

Step-N-Catch-Random Left/Right

The catcher will get into proper receiving position with the knees bent, thighs parallel with the ground and spread apart not further than shoulder width. The toes should be facing forward, heels up off the ground, weight on the balls of the feet and the butt down, but not resting on the heels. The chest should be leaning forward and the knees pulled back so that the shoulders are stacked above the knees. The glove arm should be bent slightly, getting the glove out in front of the body and the throwing hand held behind the back. The coach will throw the ball just to the outside of the left or right shoulder. The catcher will step with their left or right foot, keeping the body low and staying in the receiving position. After making the catch the catcher should return to the original position and throw the ball back to the coach or roll it off to the side. This drill is good to develop strength in the legs and help with the movement necessary to get to the ball to the left of the catcher.

Forward-N-Backward Squat Step

The catcher will get into proper receiving position with the knees bent, thighs parallel with the ground and spread apart not further than shoulder width. The toes should be facing forward, heels up off the ground, weight on the balls of the feet and the butt down, but not resting on the heels. The chest should be leaning forward and the knees pulled back so that the shoulders are stacked above the knees. The glove arm should be bent slightly, getting the glove out in front of the body and the throwing hand held behind the back. The coach will command the catcher to either step forward or backward and will then throw the ball to the catcher while the catcher steps either backward or forward with their right foot and then their left foot as the ball approaches and completing the steps before catching the ball. After making the catch the catcher will throw the ball back to the coach and repeat the same sequence until the required distance for the drill is achieved.

Clock Drill Command

The catcher will get into proper receiving position with the knees bent, thighs parallel with the ground and spread apart not further than shoulder width. The toes should be facing forward, heels up off the ground, weight on the balls of the feet and the butt down, but not resting on the heels. The chest should be leaning forward and the knees pulled back so that the shoulders are stacked above the knees. The glove arm should be bent slightly, getting the glove out in front of the body and the throwing hand held behind the back. The catcher will imagine a clock on the ground around their feet. Twelve o'clock is in front of their feet, three is to the right, six is directly behind and nine o'clock is to the left. The coach will tell the catcher what number to turn to and the catcher will jump to that position and then jump back to face the coach at the twelve o'clock position. When the coach gives the six position the catcher will jump all the way around to face the six position and then jump back into the twelve position. If the coach says twelve the catcher will immediately drop down to both knees like they are blocking a ball in the dirt and then pop back up onto their feet. The better the catcher gets at moving their feet and body the quicker the commands should be. Great drill for building leg strength and body movement as well as making the catcher think and react quickly.

Double Knees

The catcher will get into proper receiving position with the knees bent, thighs parallel with the ground and spread apart not further than shoulder width. The toes should be facing forward, heels up off the ground, weight on the balls of the feet and the butt down, but not resting on the heels. The chest should be leaning forward and the knees pulled back so that the shoulders are stacked above the knees. The glove arm should be bent slightly, getting the glove out in front of the body and the throwing hand held behind the back. Without a ball the catcher will release the feet from the ground and drop onto the knees. The knees should go into the same location where the feet were. The glove should turn open to the pitcher with the fingers down toward the ground. It should go between the catcher's legs up next to the groin area with the glove hand behind the glove. Chin should tuck down to the chest and the elbows should flair out a little away from the body. This is the blocking position for a ball thrown in the dirt down the middle of the plate. The catcher will then spring off the knees and pull the feet back underneath them and ready to perform another double knee. Good drill; to work on the quickness of the feet in blocking the ball down the middle.

Russian Shuffle

The catcher will get into proper receiving position with the knees bent, thighs parallel with the ground and spread apart not further than shoulder width. The toes should be facing forward, heels up off the ground, weight on the balls of the feet and the butt down, but not resting on the heels. The chest should be leaning forward and the knees pulled back so that the shoulders are stacked above the knees. The glove arm should be bent slightly, getting the glove out in front of the body and the throwing hand held behind the back. The catcher will step out with the right foot and then quickly bring it back underneath them and then step out quickly with the left foot and bring it back underneath them. Continue the drill for specified number of times. This drill helps quicken the feet and helps the catcher understand weight transfer.

Catcher Pick-Ups

The catcher will get into proper receiving position with the knees bent, thighs parallel with the ground and spread apart not further than shoulder width. The toes should be facing forward, heels up off the ground, weight on the balls of the feet and the butt down, but not resting on the heels. The chest should be leaning forward and the knees pulled back so that the shoulders are stacked above the knees. The glove arm should be bent slightly, getting the glove out in front of the body and the throwing hand held behind the back. The coach will get about 10 to 15 feet in front of the catcher and roll a ball to the right or left of the catcher. The catcher will step in the direction of the ball and field it, toss it back to the coach and then return the foot back to the beginning position. Then the coach will roll a ball in the opposite direction and the catcher will step with the foot the ball was rolled in and field the ball and toss it back to the coach.

Squat Jumps-N-Catch

The catcher will get into proper receiving position with the knees bent, thighs parallel with the ground and spread apart not further than shoulder width. The toes should be facing forward, heels up off the ground, weight on the balls of the feet and the butt down, but not resting on the heels. The chest should be leaning forward and the knees pulled back so that the shoulders are stacked above the knees. The glove arm should be bent slightly, getting the glove out in front of the body and the throwing hand held behind the back. The coach will command the catcher to hop and the catcher will hop on the balls of the feet three times while remaining in the catcher's position. The coach will throw the ball to the catcher just prior to them finishing the third hop. The catcher will catch the ball and toss it back to the coach while remaining in the catcher's position. Excellent drill to help the catcher concentrate on two different things at once and to help them maintain balance while catching the ball.

Sequence

The catcher will start standing with the feet shoulder width apart and weight on the front half of the body and balls of the feet. The coach will throw the ball at the catcher's knees and the catcher will bend down and catch the ball, will stand up and throw the ball back. The coach will throw another ball down at the knees and the catcher will elevator down and this time will stay down and throw the ball back to the coach from a crouched position. Then the coach will call out left or right and throw the ball that direction. The catcher will step in the direction and sway the body behind the pitch then step back into the starting position and throw the ball back. Then the coach will throw the ball in the opposite direction and the catcher will perform the proper step to get behind the ball. Coach calls out; bunny hop and the catcher will bunny hop 3 times and then make the catch. Do this twice. The coach then calls out; walk forward, throw the ball and the catcher catches it and throws it back. Then walk back word and coach throws the ball and catcher catches it and throws it back. The calls out some clock positions and throwing the ball after two or three calls. The last sequence is double knees with the coach throwing the ball after each double knee. This drill is great to build stamina and help the catcher perform all the steps necessary to accomplish the skills needed for catching. The sequence can be done in any order and the coach can add or subtract when ever it is necessary.

Framing Around the Horn

The catcher will get into proper receiving position with the knees bent, thighs parallel with the ground and spread apart not further than shoulder width. The toes should be facing forward, heels up off the ground, weight on the balls of the feet and the butt down, but not resting on the heels. The chest should be leaning forward and the knees pulled back so that the shoulders are stacked above the knees. The glove arm should be bent slightly, getting the glove out in front of the body and the throwing hand held behind the back. The coach will throw the baseball to the catcher just outside the strike zone all around the plate. The coach should start to the catcher's glove side and then just work around the strike zone in a clockwise motion, throwing the ball just outside the strike zone so that the catcher will sway the body to the ball, getting the chest behind the ball and working on framing the ball into the strike zone. This drill allows the catcher to work on framing the marginal pitch. Going around the horn allows the catcher to know what is coming next so that they can concentrate on their body movement in that direction and not have to worry about where the ball is going to be thrown.

Blocks-Left, Right Random

The catcher will get into proper receiving position with the knees bent, thighs parallel with the ground and spread apart not further than shoulder width. The toes should be facing forward, heels up off the ground, weight on the balls of the feet and the butt down, but not resting on the heels. The chest should be leaning forward and the knees pulled back so that the shoulders are stacked above the knees. The glove arm should be bent slightly, getting the glove out in front of the body and the throwing hand held behind the back. The coach will throw the baseball in the dirt to the left of the catcher, just outside the feet. The catcher will get their body behind the ball, making sure the left shoulder gets outside the baseball and the chest stays square to the plate. The glove should go to the ground, palm facing forward and the fingers down and the throwing hand should go behind the glove. The catcher should keep the chest in front of the hips, with the butt up and the chin should tuck down into the chest which helps the catcher watch the ball. It is important to stress to the catcher to not try and catch the ball, but block it with the body.

Drop/Circle Step-Coach Pull Aways

The coach will position themselves directly behind the catcher, who is behind the plate and in the receiving position. The coach will have a ball in each hand and will place the balls on either side of the catchers head and out in front so the catcher can see them out of their peripheral vision. The coach will pull one of the balls back toward them or move one of them up above the catchers head. The catcher will perform the proper drop step or circle step and body turn in the direction of the ball that was moved. This drill is good for developing reaction time for pop-ups behind and above the plate.

Bunts-Random

The catcher will get behind the plate in receiving position. The coach will position themselves directly behind the catcher and roll a ball any where out in front of the plate, and calling out to the catcher where to throw the ball. The catcher will move up and out to the ball. When the catcher gets to the ball, they should perform the proper step it takes to get the throw to the base throwing to. The catcher will bend down to the ball sweeping the ball with the glove into the throwing hand, keeping the body low, while stepping with short and quick steps throwing the ball to a base. The key is to get the glove shoulder and hip pointed to the bag and the momentum moving to the bag the catcher is throwing to. Great drill to work on the reaction it takes to cover bunts and work on the footwork for all bunts, throwing to all the bases.

Snakes-Right Hand, Left Hand

The catcher will get down in the receiving position with their right hand on the outside of the body, finger tips touching the ground. While the right hand remains in contact with the ground on the outside of the leg, the catcher will walk forward in a crouched position for 25 feet. This drill helps develop strength and flexibility as well as balance.

Snakes-Both Hands Outside

The catcher will get down in the receiving position with their right and left hands on the outside of the body, finger tips touching the ground. While the both hands remain in contact with the ground on the outside of the legs, the catcher will walk forward in a crouched position for 25 feet. This drill helps develop strength and flexibility as well as balance.

Snakes-Both Hands Inside

The catcher will get down in the receiving position with their right and left hands in between the knees, finger tips touching the ground. While the both hands remain in contact with the ground between the legs, the catcher will walk forward in a crouched position for 25 feet. This drill helps develop strength and flexibility as well as balance.

Block Reaction

The catcher will get down in the receiving position behind the plate and the coach will stand out in front approximately 10 to 15 feet. The coach will point, roll, or throw a ball to the catchers left, right or directly in front of them. The catcher takes the proper steps and blocking techniques to get in front of the ball and stop it. This drill gives the catcher practice at blocking the ball and working on the proper blocking techniques in quick repetitions.

Ladder Drills