

NOTE

Always warm up arm with a proper catch with a partner. Throw standing up: parallel, then perpendicular to partner. Get down on left knee, right leg up: par/perp. Seated. Make sure you're loose and arm is warm before starting any throwing drills.

Catchers ... Be Vocal!

Ensure your catcher knows and understands it's his job to be vocal ... to yell to the field the number of outs, where the play is, etc. He should always know the count on the batter too. He's a leader on (and off) the field. He's a traffic cop, directing the players and the ball, calling for the cut. He's got to be vocal and rewarded when he is ... remind him and praise him when he does it on his own.

STANCES

Signal Stance = heels and knees close together, shielding 1st & 3rd base (with glove too) ... just you and the pitcher.

Primary Receiving Stance (no one on base) = toes out, comfortable, flexible lower half, able to sway to ball/side to side ... flash a target and step into position, heels on the ground.

Tip: Absorb the ball = soft hands with slightest "give" as ball enters glove, especially high pitches ... let them travel to glove a little deeper.

Secondary "Ready" Stance (Runner(s) On) = butt up with thighs parallel to ground upon pitcher set; heels on the ground, left foot slightly forward to help with transfer and footwork; flash a target; catch in front of chest and transfer in one continuous quick, controlled motion.

Tip: When getting into final position, we can WALK into position, or (especially if the opposing teams starts picking up on location early) you can HOP into position once batter is set. Keep a "rhythm" each and every time ... flash, step, step, set ... whatever works for you.

THE TARGET / PRE-PITCH

The target is one of the most crucial aspects to receiving. To receive the ball well, we have to think about what our hand, wrist and forearm are doing before the pitch. We then "flash" our target to the pitcher as the initial spot where we want the pitch. We want to give a nice open-glove target to the pitcher. We want to get him locked in.

But when he starts his motion, we want to relax our hand and wrist so that we can adjust to the pitch. This relaxing of the hand and wrist should cause the glove to slightly drop or turn (quarter-turn).

FOOT WORK

Goal is to shuffle the right foot over the spot where the chin was hanging before the shuffle ... this means you'll "gain ground" in the process, actually moving forward with the very 1st movement.

Note: We must transfer the ball BEFORE we start the shuffle and rise up.

Once up, the weight is on the inside back foot 75% ... right knee is flexed and in front of foot – in a powerful, athletic position to throw moving forward (not standing straight up).

Tip – Draw a line or tape a line that intersects center of plate off apex and extends behind 36". When we shuffle and get into throwing position, the goal is to have both toes perpendicular to the line and touch it if possible. Also ensure you've gained ground by checking the left foot is nearer the apex of home plate. In doing so you've made a good shuffle and your momentum is moving forward towards your target (e.g. 2nd base).

FIELDING BUNTS

Know the situation ... how many outs ... where are the runners ... what's the batter's count? Get the out without sacrificing the run. Bunts to center and right of mound are attacked moving directly to ball and picking the ball up off our back foot so that we're in throwing position. Some catchers will scoop the ball with glove and hand. Balls to left of mound, we "circle around" the ball and again pick up ball off back foot.

FIELDING DRILLS:

Right, Right, Left Hook – Place ball approx. 10 – 12 feet in front of plate, equally spaced from 3rd base line, center, and 1st base line. Catcher will start from secondary stance. On "GO" he attacks the far right ball, picks up off back foot and throws down to 1st; resets, attacks the middle ball, picks up off back foot and throws down to 1st; resets, attacks the left ball by "circling" it, picks up off back foot and throws down to 1st. This drill is repeated 4x at 50%, 75%, 100%, 100%. He should call "inside" if throwing to the left of base or fair territory; call "outside" if throwing to right of base or foul territory.

PASS BALLS

If ball gets by, turn to LEFT and "surround" the ball taking an angle that allows for a scoop and transfer to hand and also allows you to keep your momentum moving forward. Keeping a runner to one base is sometimes the best you can do.

However, if runner's on 3rd, you must ID the ball, slide to knees (or better yet pop-slide jabbing right leg out for leverage) and square shoulders to plate, tossing (over or underhand) to spot near plate. It's the pitcher's job to be there!

PASS BALL DRILL

ID, scoop and throw – Catcher starts from secondary stance. Coach places a ball somewhere behind him (without him looking), mimicking a pass ball. On “go” catcher turns to left, identifies the ball, attacks, scoops and throws to target at plate (coach or bucket).

Tip: This is a great opportunity for PFP and get the pitchers engaged and in the routine of covering home on pass balls with runner on 3rd.

RECEIVING /BLOCKING/ TRANSFER/PICK-OFFS

We want a “quiet” upper body and soft hands when receiving the ball. Let the ball work to you vs. stabbing at it. Any ball in the pure strike zone (and between knees) there should be NO movement of body, just the glove squeezing the ball.

RECEIVING DRILLS:

The Wall – Sit tall with back and head against a wall or fence, legs out flat on floor in front “V”. Coach throws ball to the corners; catch by just moving glove, avoiding leaning or lunging for the ball ... head and back stay against wall at all times.

Bare under-hand catch & Toss to partner in crouch - Toss tennis ball underhand with throwing hand to partner and hit all areas of “zone”; catch the ball and hold with as little movement afterwards as possible ... “freeze” the catch while swaying into position. Start with lighter ball(s), then progress to baseball.

Angle throws – with coach (pitcher) at 1st or 3rd base line, catcher lines up normally with only eyes and head toward thrower. Concentrate on sway and catch (angle of the glove).

Pitch from platform (chair) – pitch from elevated platform to mimic low entry strike; turn the glove (thumb) forward and upward to catch out front and hold strike

Rapid fire – balls are thrown in quick succession to test the catcher’s ability to catch and reset ... really bring it and challenge the catcher’s reaction skill!

BLOCKING DRILLS:

Already Down - Catcher is in blocking position (head down, chest arced, glove in 5-hole) ... balls tossed in front with catcher's goal to hit 3' circumference target area (around plate).

Block & Recover (Short Range) "Down the middle (in the dirt)" – Glove moves first, bury the glove in the 5-hole, knees replace the feet upon dropping into position, chest forward (back is arched). Chin to chest to see the ball off your chest. Target is a 3-foot circle around the plate.

B & R - "Right or Left of plate (in the dirt)" – Push off inside of opposite foot (e.g. push off inside of right foot to move left) to play ball to the "outside" by throwing the hips ... squaring up shoulders with elbows to hips, glove in 5-hole and throwing hand tucked behind glove palm forward. We must react to this pitch BEFORE it hits the ground. Goal is to get parallel to the angle of the plate. Bottom line: Our objective is to block a ball and keep it in front of us.

Block, Recover, Scoop – Block ball keeping it in front ... get to ball and stay low bending legs not waist; scoop the ball with glove, gather to belly/chest; work on good transfer of ball from glove to hand. We need to get to feet quickly and "surround" the ball ... we scoop by "shoveling" the ball with the glove to our hand.

Note: Dropped 3rd strike requires special attention, especially if runner on 3rd. Gather the ball first! You may have to check the runner at 3rd. Get around the runner and create a good throwing lane (inside or outside, depending where the ball was picked up). Tell your 1st baseman where you're throwing by yelling "Inside" (fair territory) or "Outside" (foul territory) so he can set up properly.

"Live" Blocking Drill (Coach throws live balls) – Hands behind back holding "bone" or glove; drop forward gaining ground with chin down and back arched ... idea is to keep ball in front near the plate. A relaxed body blocks better than a stiff one ...relax. +++Same drill with glove snapping down first

Dynamic Blocking Drill (Zig-zag) – 10 Balls set up in zig-zag formation; catcher takes stance over 1st ball, drops into block position, pops up into secondary stance and progresses through line of balls concentrating on position of body and angle of the block (always to plate or front).

			↘X				↘X		
→X		→X		→X		→X		→X	→X
	↙X				↙X				

TRANSFER DRILLS:

When receiving the ball, we want to catch it “deeper” when there’s a play to be made (throw down). This means we catch it without extension of the arm; rather it’s caught closer to our chest. Roll the glove towards your throwing hand. “Fork” the ball by gripping with two fingers (index and middle) to ensure a good grip. Once transferred to hand, separate by pulling elbow back and glove moving away (think pulling back a bow and arrow). Elbow stays “inside 90-degrees” ... we don’t want extension of the arm or the ball to drop below our elbow at this point. Stay short, stay quick, stay efficient!

Transfer & Separate - Drill is simply to practice the transfer maintaining control, good grip and high elbow by repeatedly removing the ball and replacing ... over and over and over.

Catch, Transfer & Separate - Ball is tossed/pitched from angles and work on timing of transfer and release.

Catch, Transfer, Separate, Shuffle – Right foot hits ground first when shuffling to ensure momentum is forward.

Catch, Transfer, Separate, Shuffle and THROW – Put it all together!

PICK OFFS to 1st and 3rd

Tip for pick-off down to 1st base: This can be done from feet or from one knee depending upon your strength and ability. Get around the left-handed batter (LHB) by jab-stepping the right foot deep to the right and swinging the left around to square the shoulders to 1st base ...we throw from behind the batter to avoid interference if possible.

Tip for pick-off down to 3rd base: Get around the right-handed batter (RHB) by jab-stepping the right foot deep behind the left and clear the area quickly ...we throw from behind the batter to avoid interference.

MEDICINE BALL DRILLS

1. Ladder drill (Requires a speed ladder)
 - a. Squat/ straddle; rotate and ball to ear (trx to throw side); re-set; 2 sets
2. Jack in the Box
 - a. Toss ball to partner on way up – squat on catch; 3 sets x 10
3. Medium Toss/Bounce Drill
 - a. Bounce ball to catcher behind plate; catcher stays “under ball” and catches with two hands away from body, transfer and shuffle to throwing position; repeat 3 sets x10