

Catcher Clinic Notes (Küster)

Hands -

Enter glove with index and middle fingers “forked” and thumb down; both glove and hand facing up. Exception in a low and outside pitch; hand and glove may be pointing sideways or down during transfer.

Ready Stance (Runner(s) On)) –

Butt up, left foot *slightly* forward (right toe equal to instep of left foot), throwing hand in front of right knee (preferably behind the glove).

Transfer in Front –

Let the ball work to you, catching close to body, as we open up to the front side to prepare load to throw. Slight counter-clockwise turn of the glove as glove moves to right shoulder. Establish grip and separate your hands, but lead this separation with the elbows.

Separation –

Again, lead the separation with the elbows. “Show the ball to 1st base” as you start the short circular path around the ear. The glove-hand will extend out in front of your elbow, past 90 degrees and the throwing arm will stay inside 90 degrees. This is commonly described as a “bow and arrow” position. The glove elbow should start with separation from the left side of the body and end up hugging (“Chicken wing”) the heart as you throw and rotate to finish.

Throw and Finish –

As the elbow begins the forward motion from a position of parallel height with the throwing hand, the throwing hand has the index finger and middle finger on top of the ball (think 4-seam fastball). This leads up to the finish, where the wrist will snap forward and down, while extending the fingers toward the target. The hand will finish out in front of the left knee, which should be directly above the foot at this point. We should see a significant ability to balance here with a slight bend in the front knee. The back leg and foot should rise up as the arm extends out in front. The leg will eventually come around and down to finish, but you shouldn’t find yourself having to support yourself from falling right away by getting that back leg on the ground. If this is the case, you must be out of control a little with your body.

Throwing Down to First & Third

To First Base - The footwork to throw to first depends on where the pitch is thrown. SITUATION: left-handed batter; dropped 3rd strike or too long a lead from the runner at first.

If our catchers can reach the ball without reaching across their body to the left & without shifting their weight to the left foot, we want them to go behind the left-handed hitter to throw to first. Upon the catch we jab-step right foot out and swing the left foot across in front, squaring up to 1st base for the throw "outside."

If the pitch is off the plate to the left and we have to shift our weight to the left foot, we let that shift happen and use it to start the movement to get in front of the hitter, redirect our right foot toward third base by dropping it back and make our throw in front of the batter to the "inside."

To Third Base - The footwork to throw to third also depends on where the pitch is thrown.

SITUATION: right-handed batter; runner at 2nd is stealing 3rd base.

If our catchers can reach the ball without reaching across their body to the right & without shifting their weight to the right foot, we want them to go behind the right-handed hitter to throw to third. We must clear the right-handed hitter enough to make our throw without hitting the batter in the helmet or back. Upon the catch, we jab-step right foot behind and out, while swinging the left foot across in front, squaring up to 3rd base for the throw "outside."

If the pitch is off the plate to the right and we have to shift our weight to the right foot, we let that shift happen and use it to start the movement to get in front of the hitter, jab-stepping the right foot out and our left foot toward third base and make our throw to the "inside."

Situation: Hitter Swings and Falls Across Plate

A situation may arise where a runner is attempting to steal and the hitter swings and misses and falls across home plate. As a catcher, this is a distraction and the hitter could possibly interfere with your throw. Do not avoid him. If he falls into you or your throwing lane, make contact. The umpire will call interference and the runner will be out.

Evaluating the throw down to 2nd (Hint: You'll need a *radar gun for this one)

1. Ball Control and Release Efficiency

1. Throw to a 10' target; under 1.5 sec is target (sub 1 sec. is excellent for 10/11U)

1. Hint: This exercise is best done in a batting cage with a target

2. *In-flight Velocity - mph of ball in flight to 2nd base

1. Throw max. velocity while standing or crow hopping; then from crouch "ready stance"

2. Crow hop vs. from crouch (less than 3% drop is target velocity)

1. i.e. a 55 mph from standing should yield to a 53 mph throw from crouch if you're achieving max velocity on both throws

3. Accuracy - Target is approx. 24 inches to right side of 2nd base, 18" off the ground.

1. You want to hit the 2nd baseman's glove on the tag side

Blocking

1. Glove makes first move to the "5-hole" between the legs on the ground
2. Drop and drive forward "gaining ground" toward the ball
3. Keep throwing hand behind glove and elbows tight to the hips
4. Keep glove on ground, do-not try to catch ball in the dirt
5. Bury chin into chest and back is arched forward or "cupped"
6. Relaxed upper body - try to keep blocked ball from rebounding too far in front
7. On dirt ball to catcher's right - push off with left foot, throwing the hips first to move into position
 - a. Same mechanics above, glove down/throwing hand behind, elbows to hips, back arched
8. On dirt ball to catcher's left - push off with right foot, throwing the hips first hips to move into position
 - a. Same mechanics above, glove down/throwing hand behind, elbows to hips, back arched

Blocking Drills:

- A. From Receiving Stance with glove on - place 3 stationary balls in front of plate & coach points to ball he wants catcher to block.
 1. Look for proper form and angle of final position for the block
- B. Receiving stance with **no glove** - coach or partner throws balls in the dirt
 1. Hands behind back, blocking with chest ONLY
- C. Receiving stance with glove - coach or partner throws balls in the dirt
- D. Three man drill - catcher in middle in catcher's stance, teammate on each side about 20 feet from catcher begin bouncing one ball at a time at catcher in middle. Each end player has 5 baseballs and continues throwing dirt balls one at a time as the catcher in the middle pops back into his stance and reverses facing one thrower and then the next. Catchers then change places.
- E. Circle group of catchers around a catcher in middle in his stance, each circling player in turn throws dirt balls as the catcher pops back into his stance and rotates clock-wise facing each thrower before changing places with one of the throwers. After all catchers complete the clock-wise drill - go throw same drill counter clockwise.

Fielding Bunts:

1. Bunts to first base side:
 - A. Take a direct approach to ball
 - B. Scoop ball with two hands, or pick up off back foot
 - C. Take a drop step to avoid hitting base runner with the throw, to the inside lane

2. Bunts toward pitcher or middle of the diamond:
 - A. Take a “Banana” approach to left of ball
 - B. Scoop ball with two hands
 - C. Take a slide step and fire the ball to the inside lane

3. Bunts toward 3rd base:
 - A. Charge the ball to the right and step over it, approaching by “circling around” with back to 1st base
 - B. Scoop, pivot around and throw to inside lane

Bunt Fielding Drill

Right, Right, Left Hook – Place 3 balls 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.

TAG PLAYS AT THE PLATE:

1. Move out in front of the plate immediately upon hit
2. Leave mask on
3. Place left foot 8 - 12 inches in front of the plate at left corner and point foot directly down the 3rd base line (to prevent injury in case of a collision) exposing only inside 3rd of plate to runner
4. Hold on to the ball with throwing hand inside the glove
5. Tag the runner with the back side of glove if runner is standing up and spin (“revolving door”) to glove side as runner makes contact & immediately look for the next play
6. Block the plate (if runner is sliding) by dropping to left knee and holding ball inside glove with throwing hand

RETRIEVING WILD PITCHES AND PASSED BALLS:

1. Turn to left if possible (unless ball is clearly off to the far right side)
2. Locate ball while sprinting to the back stop; take off mask only after ball i.d.'d & toss mask to side
3. “Pop-slide” on left knee while grasping baseball in bare hand: right leg may extend or “jab step out” to push off for balance and power
4. Immediately, without hesitation, fire a strike to the pitcher covering home plate

RECEIVING DRILL Progressions:

- A. **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) e.g. whiffle, tennis, rubber; and then progress to baseball. 20 catches each
- B. **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 4 corners; catch by just moving glove, avoiding leaning or lunging for the ball ... head and back stay against wall at all times. Catch and hold with “quiet” upper body.
- C. **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).
- D. **Pitch from platform (chair)** – pitch from elevated platform to mimic low entry strike; turn the glove (thumb) forward and slightly clock-wise to catch out front and hold strike.
- E. **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!

Footwork and Accuracy Drill:

“T” Drill - Goal is to get parallel to the line to the target from the perpendicular starting stance. The right foot should relocate to a spot over where the chin was hanging and the left foot at least to the apex of the plate (having gained ground) in an athletic position loaded to throw. The feet start at 3 and 9 o'clock and “jump shuffle” to 6 and 12 o'clock (right foot hits ground first).

- A. Mark an up-side-down “T” (on floor or in dirt) with 3' base line intersecting apex of home plate (6 & 12 o'clock); the top of the “T” (to 6 and 12 o'clock) is where the catcher is starting in crouch.
- B. Pitch ball to catcher from short distance in front.
- C. Upon catch, catcher simultaneously transfers ball and “jump shuffles” by taking short jab step forward with right foot and feints throw to target. Check to see that the feet are parallel on the base line leading from the head of the T; otherwise the throw will be off-line. Also see that he's “gained ground” by moving forward
 1. The right foot should relocate to a spot over where the chin was hanging
- D. Progress to throws to 2nd Base – check POP Time (Catcher's Glove to 2nd baseman's glove)

MEDICINE BALL DRILLS (More advanced but worth the extra work!)

Note : Recommend using a rubber Sparq weighted medicine ball

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