



Pitching Instruction

Pitching

Key Points

- Setup
- Arm circle mechanics
- Drive mechanics
- Fielding
- Pitching objectives





Pitching Instruction

Setup

- Pitcher should approach the pitching plate with ball in one hand (preferably the glove)
- Both feet must be in contact with the plate (throwing side foot in front, glove side foot behind)
- Hands brought together
- Pitcher must pause for 1-10 seconds before continuing movement
- When hands separate the pitch has begun





Pitching Instruction

Setup

- Beginning pitchers should mark their power line in the dirt for reference
 - Power line is a line from the pushoff foot to the target (home plate or catcher)
- The ball should remain above the power line throughout the pitching motion and the stride should ideally land with the front toe just touching the line





Pitching Instruction

Arm Circle Mechanics

- Pitchers should learn to throw the ball correctly underhand before being taught to pitch
 - This means playing catch without any consideration to the pitching motion
- Fluid motion and weight transfer are similar to the overhand throw



Pitching Instruction

Arm Circle Mechanics

- Reverse chaining is most effective for developing the pitching motion
- Begin with ensuring the pitcher is able to turn over the hand by using internal rotation (IR) of the upper arm
- Reference Pitching instruction for training IR on the AMSA website under Player Development

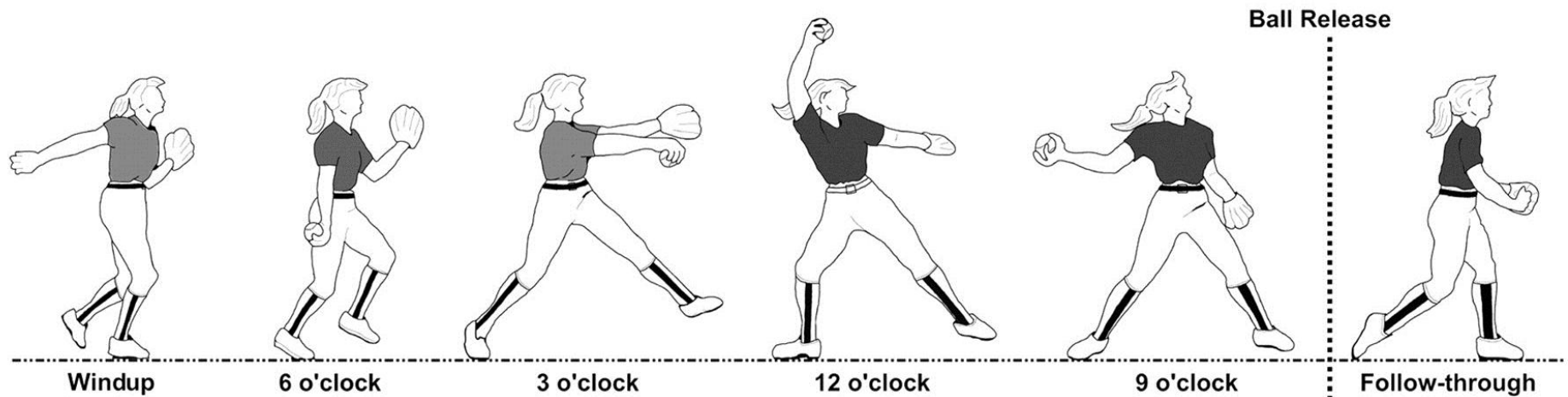




Pitching Instruction

Arm Circle Mechanics – Key Points

- Arm circle stays above Power Line
- Glove goes up when ball goes up and comes down when ball comes down – keep balance between arms
- Palm should be mostly up by 9 o'clock position
- Hand should pull ball down back side of circle with pinky finger leading
- Release point is at back hip





Pitching Instruction

Arm Circle Mechanics – Drill Progression

- 9 o'clock drill
- 12 o'clock drill
- Rock and circle drill

In the absence of a catcher the pitcher can pitch into their own glove

- Start drills from a fully open position with ball in both hands
- Allow lower body to move and encourage weight transfer
- Fluid motion is very important
- Throwing arm should always be relaxed and loose



Pitching Instruction

Drive Mechanics

- Transfer weight to back foot
- Lean forward into sprinter position and transfer weight quickly onto push foot
- Push forward off plate while bringing stride knee high





Pitching Instruction

Drive Mechanics

- Arm circle should be near 12 o'clock at time of landing
- Landing should be on firm leg with slightly bend knee
- Landing foot should be around 45° for balance and stability of knee





Pitching Instruction

- Young pitchers (U10, U12) should only be concerned about proper technique
- Telling a pitcher to throw strikes leads to aiming the ball which works against their training
- Proper technique will lead to better control with practice
- All pitchers should be encouraged to pitch at least 4 days per week (100 pitches per day is reasonable)



Pitching Instruction

- Pitchers should be encouraged to finish in a strong fielding position with the glove in front of body
- AMSA strongly recommends the use of a fielders mask for all pitchers. Each team is provided with one to allow players to try them out





Pitching Instruction

- Pitchers must put in extra time to develop their skills – encourage parents to participate
- As control develops they should be encouraged to throw to the corners of the plate
- Many pitchers take on total responsibility for the (lack of) success of the team – make sure the entire team shares in successes and failures





Catching Instruction

Catching Elements

- Stance
- Receiving
- Blocking
- Retrieving
- Throwing
- Tagging



Major League catchers of 1887 in various stances



Catching Instruction

Catchers have 3 different stances

1. Signals or Waiting Stance

- Point knees to middle infielders
- Balance on toes
- Use mitt to shield signs from 3B coach or bench
- Keep sign hand close to body
- Use only fingers to give signs (don't move hand around)





Catching Instruction

Catchers have 3 different stances

2. Standard Stance (no throw or block required)

- Follow your glove – glove is always first thing to move
- Slide into the slot after release of pitch
- Throwing hand behind your throwing side ankle or your back
 - Hand in a loose fist with thumb tucked in
- Position your glove just out in front of your knees.
- Turn your toes out with heels on ground
- Chest up to provide a good target





Catching Instruction

Catchers have 3 different stances

3. Runners on Stance (or DTS situation)

- Widen your feet to make a more athletic base
- Feel your weight on the inside part of your toes
- Even though your rear end is up higher, keep your chest up
- Protect your throwing hand behind glove (with closed fist)

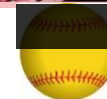
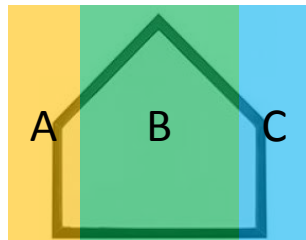




Catching Instruction

Receiving

- Allow umpire to see strikes
- Make strikes look like strikes
- DO NOT attempt to make balls look like strikes (pulling ball back to strike zone)
- Always turn glove in towards middle of plate (except low pitch)
- Try to catch half of ball
- Divide plate into 3 sections (A, B, C)
 - In Zones A, C catch the outside half of ball
 - In Zone B catch top half of ball





Catching Instruction

Blocking

- We block pitches to prevent runners from advancing on a passed ball or wild pitch
- We should be ready to block any time there are runners on base or 2 strikes on a batter using Runners On stance
- We learn blocking from the bottom up





Catching Instruction

Blocking Position

- Have your glove between your legs to close off the “5-hole”
- Touch glove webbing to the ground
- Keep throwing hand behind glove, still in loose fist
- The glove is only used to block hole between legs, not to catch the ball – once in blocking position commit to making the block!
- Throwing hand moves down first as glove turns over then drops
- Have elbows flared out to the side exposing the full chest protector
- There should be a curve to your back with middle of your shoulder in front of middle of your knees
- Keep your chin down to protect your throat (tip: go as far down as you can while still being able to see the pitching rubber)
- Feet come together behind body to trap any ball that gets between your legs





Catching Instruction

Reaching Blocking Position

- Start from a balanced 'Runner ON' stance
- Lead with the glove to where the ball is going
- Shift body to side if necessary to align with pitch (try to keep shoulders and hips square to pitcher)
- Drop to knees which should be spread apart about as wide as your feet were in the "Runner-ON" stance
- Feet come together behind body (lower legs in 'V')
- Arms pretty much vertical aimed downwards at sides
- Turn your glove open with fingers pointed down, bare hand behind and remaining in very loose, relaxed fist with thumb tucked inside
- Tuck your chin down to protect your throat
- Hunch shoulders forward
- Use chest protector to block ball – do not attempt to catch the ball





Catching Instruction

Retrieving

There are 3 scenarios we need to retrieve a ball from

1. Ball close in front of catcher (bunt or block)
2. Ball well in front of plate (bunt or block)
3. Ball behind catcher (passed ball or wild pitch)





Catching Instruction

Retrieving ball close in front from block or bunt

- Hands forward and drop them to ground on both sides of ball
- Push forward and rotate around glove move feet into throwing position
- Push body up with arms and move upper body into throwing position
- Hands don't drop below knees until front foot is set





Catching Instruction

Retrieving ball in front of plate from block or bunt

- Use your hands to help you up if necessary
- Take path that reaches the ball in good throwing posture – curved path if necessary (banana!)
- Don't touch the ball until feet are in position
- Rake the ball to pick it up





Catching Instruction

Retrieving ball from backstop on passed ball or overthrow

- return ball to the plate
- Use your hands to help you up if necessary
- Run hard to the ball
- Take an outside route to ball
- Slide on knees at ball to slow down quickly
- Glove knee comes up as ball is picked up
- Target is the PITCHER'S GLOVE due to minimal reaction time

She forgot to slide





Catching Instruction

Throwing

- Catchers need to throw quickly so the arm does not make a large backswing
- Footwork is the most important factor in throwing success
- After receiving ball catcher should jump-turn to land in throwing position
- While turning the glove, ball and throwing hand are brought back to catcher's ear
- Land with weight on back foot then stride to front foot





Catching Instruction

Tagging

- Safety is the primary concern for our catchers
- Mask should be left on for any tag plays
- Catcher should set up with left foot at the front inside corner of the plate awaiting throw – you cannot block the plate without the ball
- When ball is received catcher drops to knee and sweeps to tag runner just in front of plate
- **AMSA does not recommend blocking of the plate under any circumstances**

We want to avoid this





Catching Instruction

General Safety



- AMSA provides catchers equipment for each team.
- Ensure that an adult is responsible for maintaining and inspecting the equipment.
- That includes checking that it fits the player correctly.
- AMSA catching masks are hockey goalie style. These masks are **intended to be left on** during play. The only time we want a catcher to remove the mask during a live ball is on a popup they want to field.
- Catchers need to do their part to protect themselves from several dangers
 - Balls – keep hand hidden behind body or glove during pitch
 - Bats – maintain safe distance from batter
 - Players – Keep mask on for tag plays at the plate and don't put yourself in a position to encourage contact



Baserunning Instruction

Baserunning

- Running technique
- Lead offs
- Sliding/Diving
- Rounding
- Obstruction/Interference





Baserunning Instruction

Running technique can and should be taught

- Forward lean
- Minimize time feet are in contact with ground
- Use arms with backwards hammer motion
- Feet lift straight up towards torso





Baserunning Instruction

Leadoffs

- Anticipation is a key component to successful baserunning
- Players should be encouraged to time the motion of the pitcher and leave the base as early as possible (ball crossing plate U12 and under, at release U14 and up)
- Recommend rocker start to allow motion to begin earlier
- Challenge players to be as aggressive as possible – min 3 steps





Baserunning Instruction

Sliding/Diving

- All players should be taught to slide as a safety issue
 - Standard slide is to be taught first with popup and hook slides added if skill level permits
- Ensure proper figure 4 (either leg under)
- Spread slide over as much leg as possible
- Lean backwards with hands up either over head or protecting face





Baserunning Instruction

Sliding/Diving

- Diving technique may be taught but ensure it is done in a safe manner
- Begin with player kneeling and extending into slide position
- Add small push from kneeling position
- Take step into dive



Still Room for Improvement



Baserunning Instruction

Rounding

- Players should always be looking for opportunities to advance
- If ball is still in play runners should round bases as far as possible
- Teach players rules regarding pitching controlling ball in circle

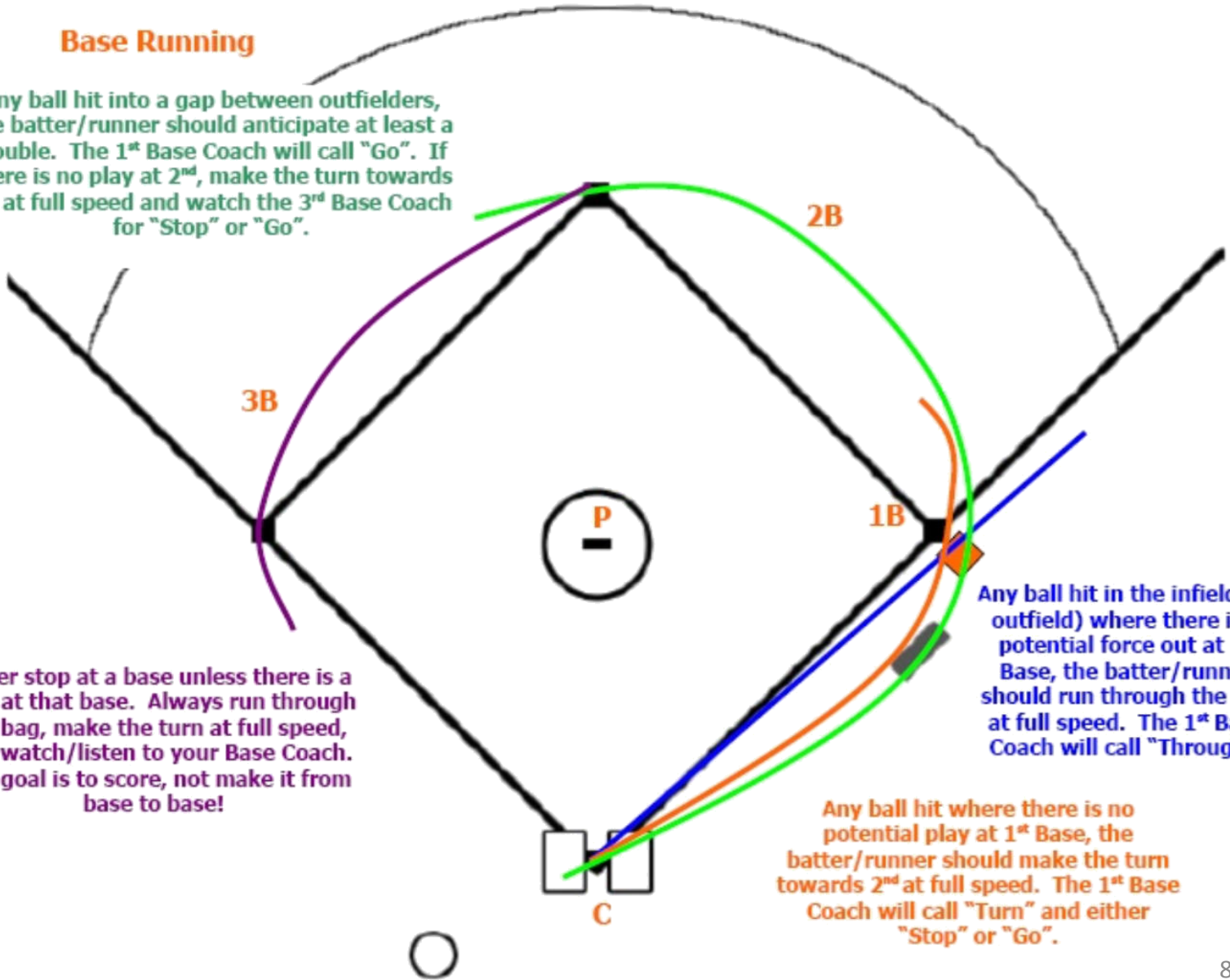




Baserunning Instruction

Base Running

Any ball hit into a gap between outfielders, the batter/runner should anticipate at least a Double. The 1st Base Coach will call "Go". If there is no play at 2nd, make the turn towards 3rd at full speed and watch the 3rd Base Coach for "Stop" or "Go".



Never stop at a base unless there is a play at that base. Always run through the bag, make the turn at full speed, and watch/listen to your Base Coach. The goal is to score, not make it from base to base!

Any ball hit in the infield (or outfield) where there is a potential force out at 1st Base, the batter/runner should run through the bag at full speed. The 1st Base Coach will call "Through".

Any ball hit where there is no potential play at 1st Base, the batter/runner should make the turn towards 2nd at full speed. The 1st Base Coach will call "Turn" and either "Stop" or "Go".



Baserunning Instruction

Obstruction/Interference

- Baserunners must avoid any infielder in the process of fielding a batted ball or they can be called out for interference
- Runner has right of way over any fielder not in possession of the ball or in the process of fielding a batted ball. Fielder can be called for obstruction
- Players need to be instructed to not allow fielders without the ball to divert them from their intended path



Baserunning Instruction

Players should be encouraged to make their own decisions on the bases

As a coach you should help them with those decisions but allowing them to learn from their own calls will make them better softball players

