

Catcher 101

SOLANA BEACH LITTLE LEAGUE

Primary Sources:

- <https://www.catchingmadesimple.com/>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/263295/2018/03/07/the-making-of-a-catcher-blue-jays-russ-martin-serves-up-a-crash-course-from-the-block-to-the-pop/>
- <http://www.baseball-catcher.com/guide/receiving.htm>
- theadvancescout.substack.com/p/5-takes-the-calls-trevino-doesn't
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoYcHSJcibk>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDADqiVkSi4>

- All material cited and can be easily found on the Internet

** Please understand that when participating in any exercise or physical activity program there is a possibility of physical injury, and choosing to engage in these drills is done so at your own risk. If the activity seems too rigorous for you, please take a break.

How to put catchers gear on

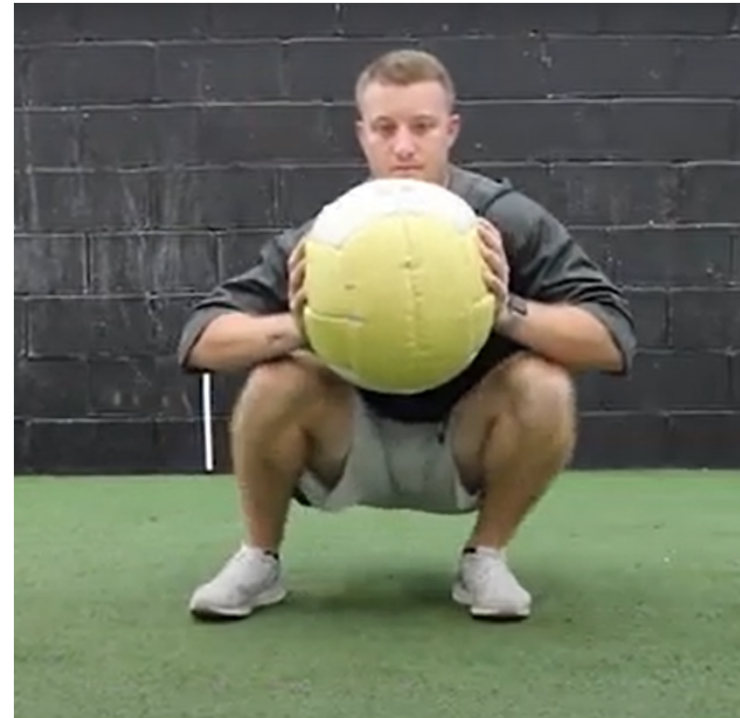
- Helmet
 - Should fit snug, not too loose
 - Should be able to see easily out of the facemask cage
- Chest Protector
 - You do not want it sagging in front or else your collar bone is exposed
 - You want it snug and not too tight or loose
- Shin Guards
 - The buckle always goes on the OUTSIDE of your leg, NEVER on the inside of your leg
 - If the buckle is on the inside, if they come undone, then the buckles can catch and you'll end up tripping
 - Should also be snug so that you can move around easily

Mobility and Stretching Drills

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Ankle Stability / Mobility

Sway back and forth



Source: <https://rocklandpeakperformance.com/three-great-mobility-drills-stretches-for-catchers/>

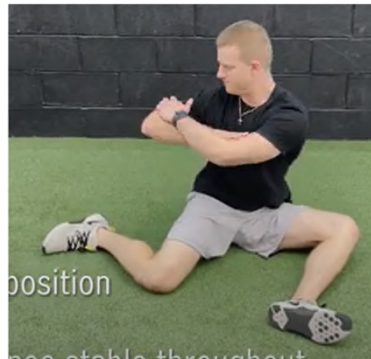
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Hip Mobility

Stretch



Twist side to side



Open hip up and down



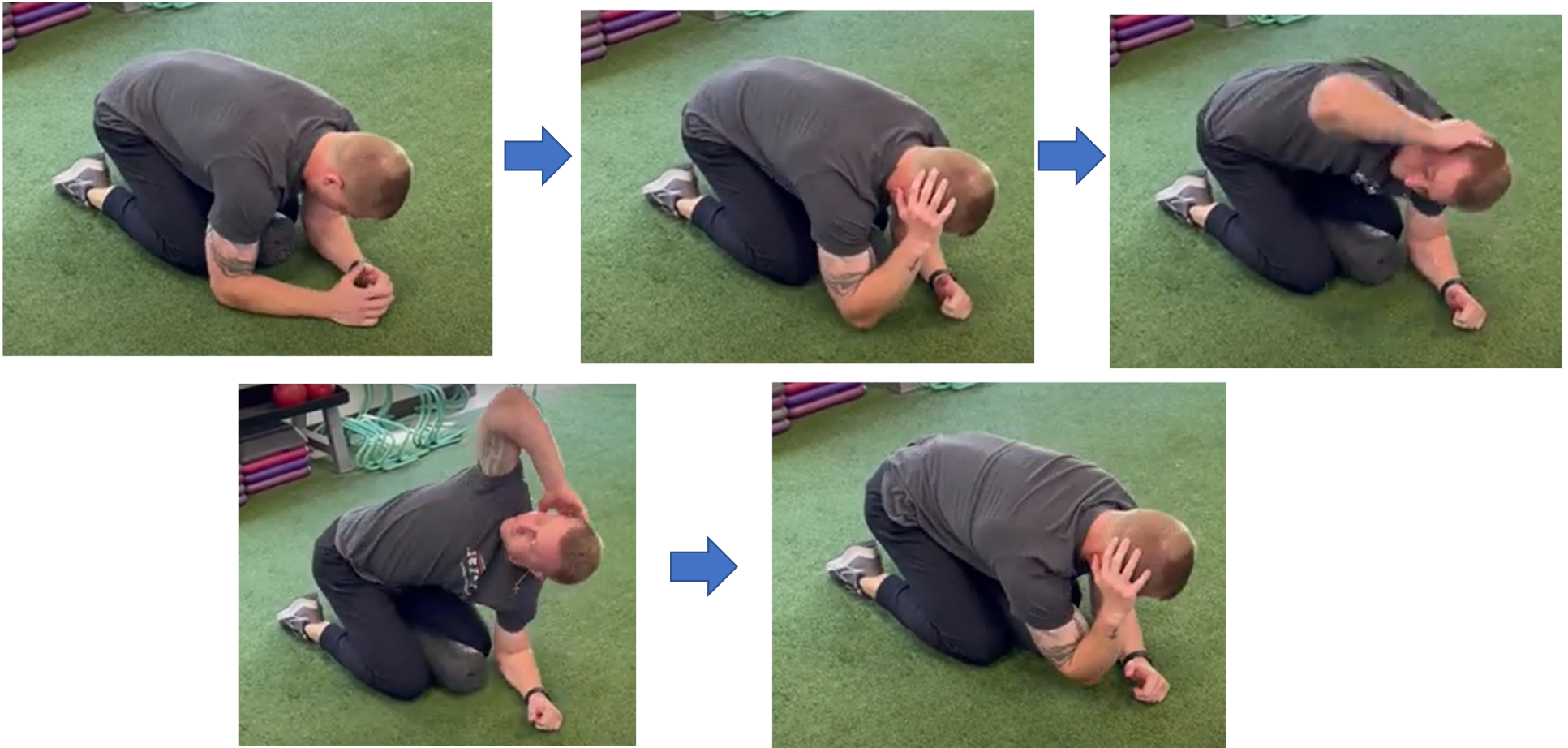
Flip and do other hip



Source: <https://rocklandpeakperformance.com/three-great-mobility-drills-stretches-for-catchers/>

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T-spine Mobility

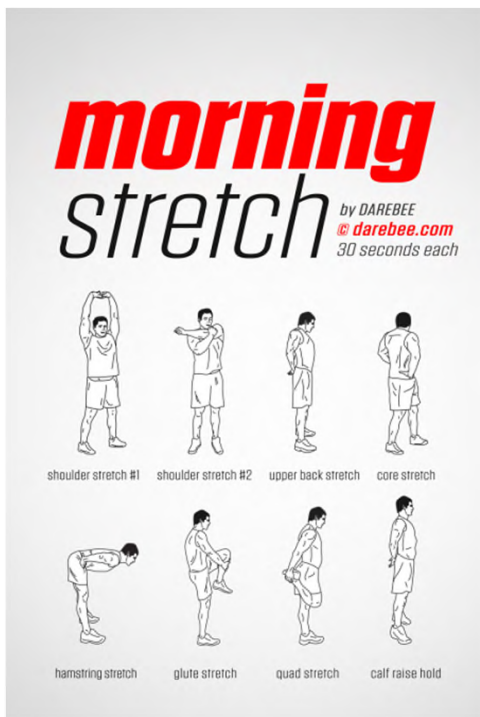


Source: <https://rocklandpeakperformance.com/three-great-mobility-drills-stretches-for-catchers/>

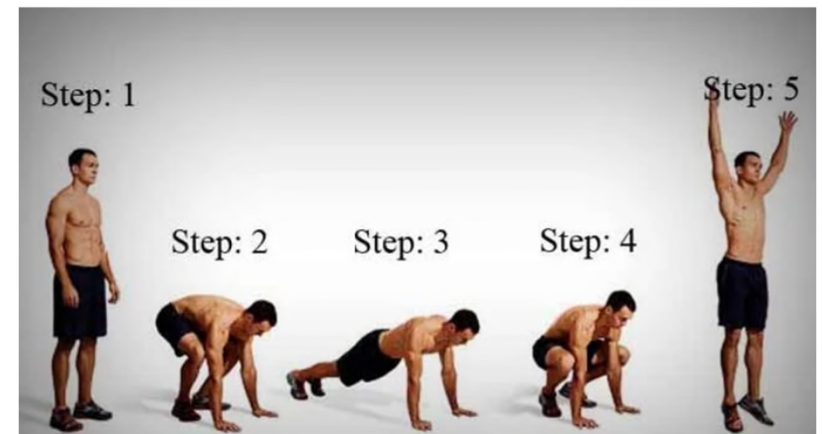
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Morning Stretch / Workout

1. Stretch
2. Burpees (10X)



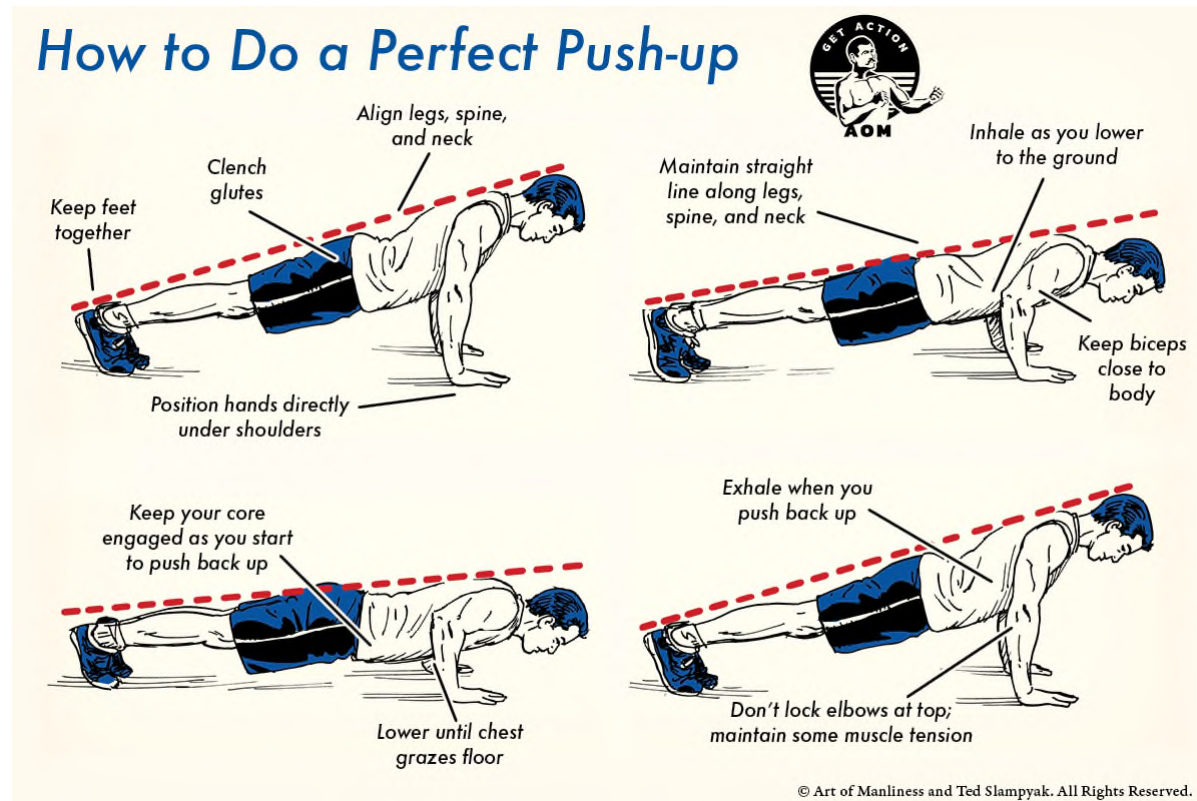
Burpees



Sources: <https://darebee.com/>
<https://wildworkoutsandwellness.com/burpees-but-why/>

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How to do proper push up



Source: <https://www.artofmanliness.com/health-fitness/fitness/how-to-do-a-perfect-push-up/>

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Yoga Poses



Source: <https://www.goodfronds.com/7-yoga-poses-to-release-stress-and-anxiety/>

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Catching Stances

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Sign Stance

- Toes should be “hang loose” distance apart: Make a “hang loose” sign with your hand- the distance between your thumb and pinky is the same distance that you want your heels apart
- Heels should be off the ground
- Twist toes into the ground to bring your knees closer together
- Glove next to your leg trying to hide the signs
- Signs up high by your cup



Source: <https://www.catchingmadesimple.com/blog/top-5-catching-stances-every-catcher-needs>
<https://www.baseballmonkey.com/learn/catcher-signals>

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Common Catcher Hand Signals



Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/153544668530931242/>

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Primary Stance

- Flat feet
- Vertical shin guards
- “M” shape when you trace the legs
- Shoulders are rolled forward
- Right hand behind your right foot
- Low target with a flat glove



Source: <https://www.catchingmadesimple.com/blog/top-5-catching-stances-every-catcher-needs>
<https://rocklandpeakperformance.com/three-great-mobility-drills-stretches-for-catchers/>

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Secondary Stance

- Feet athletic distance apart (just wider than shoulder width)
- Knees out (think up and back)
- Butt just below 90 degrees
- Shoulders rolled forward
- Low target



Source: <https://www.catchingmadesimple.com/blog/top-5-catching-stances-every-catcher-needs>
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/646970302696695961/>

Single Knee Stance

- From a sign stance, put your left knee down in front
- Kick your right foot out
- Spin your left foot behind your butt
- Sit your butt back and down
- Roll your shoulders forward
- Put your right hand behind your leg
- Give a nice, low, flat target



Source: <https://www.catchingmadesimple.com/blog/top-5-catching-stances-every-catcher-needs>

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/263295/2018/03/07/the-making-of-a-catcher-blue-jays-russ-martin-serves-up-a-crash-course-from-the-block-to-the-pop/>

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Modified Kick Stand Stance

Why a Modified Kickstand?

There's a few reasons:

- Gets shoulder closer to the ground
- Saves the catcher's legs
- More comfortable
- Often they aren't mobile enough to get into a big/open primary stance

Keys to a good modified kickstand stance

- Get your hips in the middle
- Get your outside foot in front of your knee
- Play around with toe up vs whole foot down
- Copy the big leaguers
- Get reps
- Think athletic thoughts



Source: <https://www.catchingmadesimple.com/blog/top-5-catching-stances-every-catcher-needs>

<https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/263295/2018/03/07/the-making-of-a-catcher-blue-jays-russ-martin-serves-up-a-crash-course-from-the-block-to-the-pop/>

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Receiving

Stick the strike

“Receiving is simply catching the ball. A good catcher will make receiving look effortless. You need to have soft hands, but at the same time be firm with your wrist and arm as you catch the ball. Look the pitch all the way into your mitt. Your glove should not move unless you want to move it.”

“If a pitcher throws a pitch that you KNOW is going to be a strike, stick the pitch. A phrase I was taught and use repeatedly with my catchers is, “stick the strike.” This means that your glove should not move in any direction (except a little back) after you catch the pitch. Hold the pitch where you caught it, BRIEFLY, then throw it back to the pitcher. **For pitches low in the zone or breaking balls, sticking the strike is especially important.** Catchers have a tendency to drop their glove in a downward movement after having caught a low or downward moving pitch. This is a bad habit and could cost your pitcher a called strike. Keep the ball in the strike zone. Stick It!”



KEYS: Soft Hands, Firm Arm and Wrist, Stick Strikes, Beat the Pitch

Source: <http://www.baseball-catcher.com/guide/receiving.htm>

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Beat the pitch to the spot

“Another phrase I use with my catchers that helps them with their receiving is "beat the pitch." As you are tracking the pitch with your eyes, you should have a good idea where the pitch will cross the plate and where you will catch it. With your mitt, beat the pitch to that spot. This will allow you to "stick" that pitch and the momentum of your glove is stopped. Stopping your downward glove momentum aids your ability to stick the low strike. DO NOT track the pitch with your mitt.”



Source: <http://www.baseball-catcher.com/guide/receiving.htm>
<https://theadvancescout.substack.com/p/5-takes-the-calls-trevino-doesnt>

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Dealing with high and low pitches

“A general rule for catching pitches that are high in the zone and borderline strikes/balls is to catch them as far back into your body as possible. Every pitch has downward movement, even fastballs. By catching a high pitch further back into your body you allow the pitch to drop. This provides the illusion of a strike that the umpire may call in your favor. This trick is especially useful with breaking balls.

For pitches low in the zone, which are borderline strikes/balls, you want to almost attack them. Extend your arm to catch them while they are still in the strike zone. You need to be careful so your mitt does not interfere with the batter's swing. Also, you do not want to fall forward off your base.

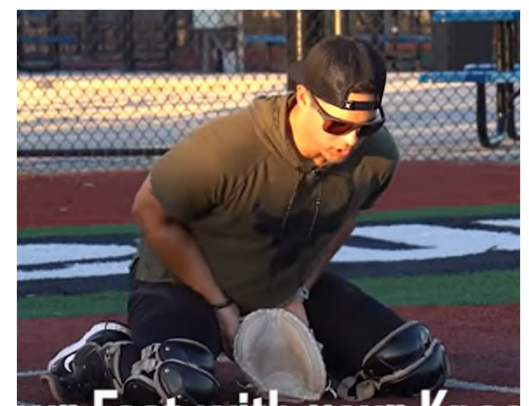
Remember for these low pitches: beat the pitch to the spot and then stick it. By applying these simple tricks for high and low pitches, you will get more strike calls for your pitcher.”



Source: <http://www.baseball-catcher.com/guide/receiving.htm>
<https://theadvancescout.substack.com/p/5-takes-the-calls-trevino-doesnt>

Blocking

Simple Blocking – all about reaction



For slower pitchers & slower pitches that you KNOW are going into the dirt:

- Lead with the glove by turning the glove over as the ball is traveling down
- From that position, then just drop the knees and have your chest at 45 degrees to the ground
- Your right hand can either be behind the glove (typically in a fist is best to protect the hand) or can be flared out to the side

For faster pitchers & pitches that you are NOT sure if they are going into the dirt:

- Replace your feet with your knees
- Kick your feet back and then land on your knees into the same blocking position
- Harder on your knees

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoYcHSJcibk>

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Standard Blocking Technique

- Drop to both knees for a pitch in the dirt directly in front of the catcher;
- The glove fills the space between the legs, with the bare hand protected behind the glove;
- Shoulders are forward and square to the pitcher;
- Head is tilted down; and
- Torso is “soft” to deaden the ball and keep it in front.



Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/263295/2018/03/07/the-making-of-a-catcher-blue-jays-russ-martin-serves-up-a-crash-course-from-the-block-to-the-pop/>

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Side Blocking

- Main key is to block the ball towards the pitcher and not just have the ball shoot off your chest protector in a random direction

- Secondary stance

- To move to side, lead with glove and push off with knee opposite you're lunging to

- Start to turn your body back towards home plate (almost like throwing your butt more to the side)

- Will land on both knees and slide on your shin guards

- Get into blocking position

- Hands need to be down and body facing towards pitcher



- Good blocking position

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eWZRUIgO3U>

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Pop Up and Throwing

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Pop Up

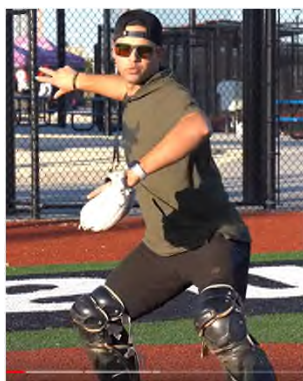
Setup



Catch ball deeper



The transfer



- Setup with runners on base
 - Be in secondary stance
 - Have your stance and right shoulder slightly back so it makes it easier to get to transfer
- Catch the ball deeper on your glove side and start leaning forward (if the pitch allows)
- The transfer:
 - Pop up and take a quick short step forward (almost a little jab step) with your right foot while turning your right shoulder back into throwing position
 - Then step forward with left foot to 2nd and fire the ball (do not have to take a huge stride)
- Practice doing this faster and faster

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoYcHSJcibk>

Receive ball and pop up

- Receive the ball
- Pop up (don't jump) and bring ball and glove to middle of chest
 - During pop up the right foot will land before right
 - Turn the catchers glove back towards your hand after you receive it for faster transfer

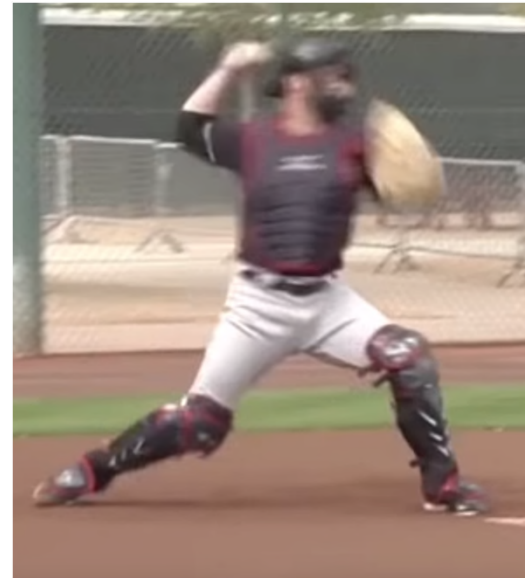


Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDADqiVki4>

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Hand break to throwing position

- Break with thumb down on throwing hand
- Pull the arm across chest and have 45 - 90 degrees or less in back elbow so not flying out to the back
 - Forearm will come up and keep that 45 – 90 degree angle (ball will be closer to your ear)
- Front glove does not have to reach out in front since you don't have as much time
- Similar to infield, the ball should not get “wet”



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDADqiVvSi4>

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Letting it fly

- From throwing position, just let it fly, do not stop the arm
 - Ok to throw $\frac{3}{4}$ to low $\frac{3}{4}$ arm slot (which is almost sidearm like Patrick Bailey)
- Do not lean too far forward or dip or yank your head
- Let your leg come around also



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDADqiVki4>

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Other

Getting to a Passed Ball

- Get out of stance quick and find the ball
- Run hard at the ball and then initiate slide
- Retrieve ball and look to throw to pitcher covering home plate



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDADqiVksI4>

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How to block the plate

- Get yourself set on a corner of the plate since you can't block the plate without the ball
- Receive the ball and then come across the bag to tag the runner



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruqSaky20iw>

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Catching pop flies as a catcher

- Get the mask off and try to find the ball while holding the mask
- Once you've acquired the ball, ditch the mask
- Try to get under the ball

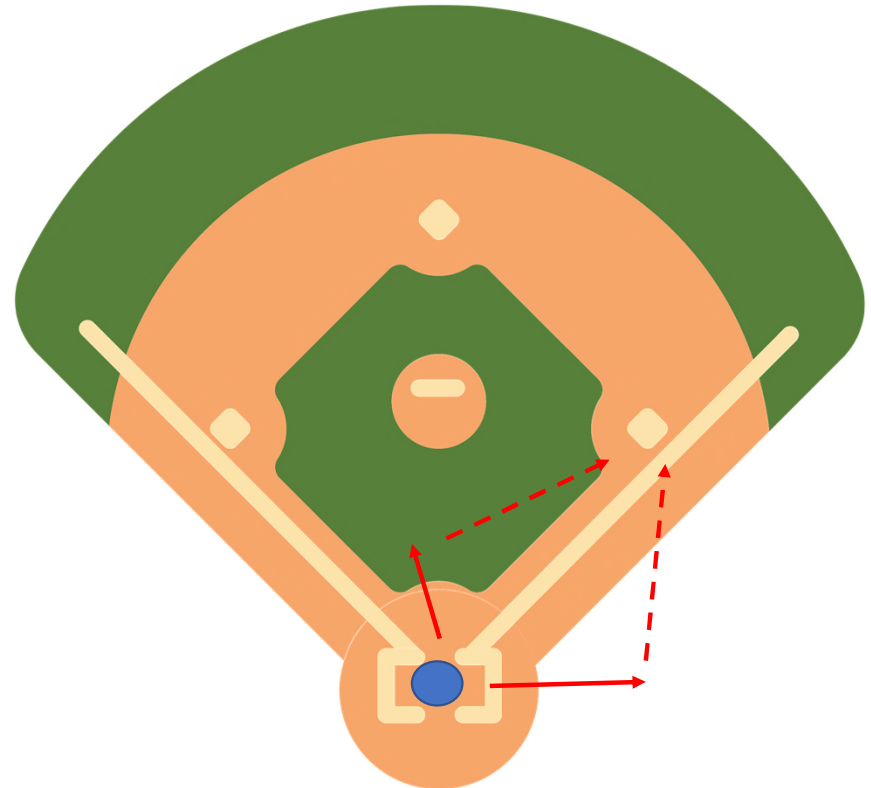
Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrsIlygdiQQ>



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Throw down to 1B on bunt or dropped 3rd strike

- On a dropped 3rd strike or bunt, the catcher has to come out far enough to create some space/angle to make the throw to first base without hitting the runner
- First baseman also has to know where the throw is coming from



Source: <https://creazilla.com/media/clipart/76536/baseball-diamond>

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Calming your pitcher down

- Request a mound visit
- Use positive and reassuring communication, focus on the next pitch, avoid criticizing
 - Say things like, "We got this," "Take a deep breath," or "Just focus on your next pitch."
 - Use a calm, confident tone of voice
 - Recognize why the pitcher might be upset (e.g., a bad pitch, a close call, pressure from the game)
 - Adapt your approach based on their personality and what might work best for them
- Maintain a relaxed body language
 - Give a subtle nod or hand gesture to show support
 - Use a quick, light pat on the back



Source: <https://blogs.fangraphs.com/players-view-are-mound-visits-really-an-issue/>

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