

## CATCH PLAY ROUTINE

**Catch Play Routine** is a structured, 15 to 20 minute activity that improves player throwing accuracy, strengthens arms, develops proper receiving of throws and practices defensive skills commonly used in games by progressing from short, controlled movements to maximum distance. Key components include focusing on a small target, using proper, consistent throwing mechanics and incorporating active, athletic feet to ensure the ball is caught in the center of the body.

### Key Tips for Effective Catch Play:

- Have players always use a 4-seam grip (i.e. across the seams) for better velocity and accuracy.
- Be consistent by performing this routine before every practice or game. This is not just simply a pre-practice or pre-game warm-up, as in “Go down the right field line and play catch”, but instead a critical part of defensive skill development. Maintaining the same, high-quality routine before every practice or game helps build good muscle memory.
- Focus on accuracy and actively avoid players making "lazy" throws. Misses should be intentional (e.g., missing chest-high rather than in the dirt).
- Other than during Warm-up Drills, players always need to move their feet to enabling more accurate throws, as well as center the ball when receiving throws.
- Have players always aim for a specific spot on their partner, such as the chest logo or glove, rather than just "the body". Partners should also always present their gloves as both a target, as well as an indication that they are ready to receive the throw.
- Do not refrain from stopping the routine to remind players of the key point(s) of a particular activity if players aren't focused – and then re-start the drill. Assistance from the other coaches and any adults that are hanging around the practice field is critical, as their role is to get a new ball into the hands of any player who misses a throw. This is so that players can immediately continue working on their skill development as opposed to chasing overthrown balls (which eats up a large chunk of baseball and softball practices). Players need to spend time building skills and not chasing errant throws.

### Core Components of a Catch Play Routine (see below for more details):

- Warm-Up (0-45 feet). This ensures that players are engaged before making full throws.
- Mid-Distance (60-90 feet): Focus here is on accuracy, receiving the ball with good footwork, moving towards the ball to receive throws and keeping their shoulders square. Have players use a modified leg lift with easy throws to partner.
- Position-Specific Drills (Various Distances): Players ALWAYS start from the ready position associated with their specific field position:
  - Infielders: Practice turning double plays, throwing from different arm angles, and throwing on the run (e.g., shortstop scrambles).
  - Outfielders: Simulate catching flies, dropping back, and making long throws with proper crow-hop technique.
  - Catchers: Practice quick transfers, framing, and throwing from a knee or full squat.
  - Pitchers Only: Work on overall mechanics, as well as footwork on pick-off throws to 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> base.
- Long Toss (90-120+ feet): Builds arm strength by throwing with a higher arc, allowing the ball to carry, and gradually stepping back. Have players start to incorporate a shuffle or a crow hop variation.
- Cool Down/Pull Downs (90-60 feet): Players finish with 5-8 hard, accurate throws from a shorter distance (pulldowns) to simulate game speed and improve command.

# **CATCH PLAY ROUTINE**

## **ALL PLAYERS**

### **Warm-Up**

#### **WRIST FLIPS**

Do seated, kneeling and/or standing; focus on being on top & behind ball; feel wrist snap to develop back-spin rotation

#### **KNEELING POWER POSITION**

Focus on getting feel for a good power position with upper body movement, alignment & follow-through.

#### **10 TOES TO TARGET / STANDING FIGURE 8**

Focus on tying in lower body to rhythm & separation; have upper body turn & release out front

#### **STANDING POWER POSITION**

Focus on tying lower body alignment and action into power position. Also, focus on rhythm and tempo of entire body as it loads to throw. Goal is to sync the lower body and upper body to throw.

## CATCH PLAY ROUTINE

INFIELDERS	OUTFIELDERS	CATCHERS	PITCHERS ONLY
<p><b>EXCHANGE FOCUS</b> Easy on arms but work on quick exchanges to throw, always moving feet.</p> <p><b>RECEIVING TAGS</b> Focus on variety of tags on each throw &amp; always moving feet to adjust; be sure to let the ball travel.</p> <p><b>BALL IN GLOVE - 2/4 STEP</b> Fielding position, footwork to throw.</p> <p><b>ON THE RUN THROWS</b> Different arm angles, slow-rollers, ball to L &amp; R; also throw off correct foot &amp; incorrect foot using various arm slots.</p> <p><b>QUICK HANDS / QUICK FEET</b> Quick exchanges &amp; throws; competition at 30 or 45 feet to see how many transitions in 20 seconds?</p>	<p><b>ROCKER STEP</b> Feel it into back foot/hip, fluid throw</p> <p><b>CROW HOP</b> Work through throw, focusing on direction</p> <p><b>RANGING TO THE RIGHT &amp; LEFT</b> Backhand/Throw plays vs. Open/Spin</p> <p><b>LONG HOPS</b> Drop hat 15' out in front of partner &amp; aim to hit it to create good long hop.</p>	<p><b>QUICK HANDS / SLOW FEET</b> Work on quick transfers; gather into R foot then drive straight to target; avoid drifting or stepping sideways</p> <p><b>SHUFFLE TO THROW</b> 3 Steps - L-R-L - Drive ball to target</p> <p><b>RECEIVING TAGS</b> Focus on variety of tags on each throw &amp; always moving feet to adjust; be sure to let the ball travel.</p> <p><b>GAME SPEED THROWS TO 2B</b> Ball in glove, 3 throws</p> <p><b>GAME SPEED THROWS TO 1B/3B</b> Ball in glove, 90 ft. - 2 to 1B and 2 to 3B</p>	<p><b>BASIC PITCHING MECHANICS</b> Work on getting to balance point; focus on smooth transition to power position with follow through.</p> <p><b>GAME SPEED PICK-OFF THROWS TO 1B</b> Work on effective turn and related footwork.</p> <p><b>GAME SPEED PICK-OFF THROWS TO 2B</b> Work on both outside and inside moves with related footwork.</p>

## CATCH PLAY ROUTINE

### **ALL PLAYERS**

#### **LONG TOSS**

Stretch out as far as possible. Players use a loose arm to gain strength.

#### **PULL DOWNS**

5-8 throws at 90+% effort; ball on a line with focus on accuracy, but fast as possible; can be done with a shuffle or a crow hop.

For more details, see the following videos:

**Catch Play Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OZJpJD--kVM>

**Key Fundamentals To Catch Play:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIUkeVvycKE>