



Berlin Youth Baseball – Drills for Pitching Basics

Goal of this document: Provide coaches, parents, and players with drills that can help start young youth down the path of learning the fundamentals of pitching and consistently throwing strikes.

Review the 4-seam grip

1.) “Horse Shoe” grip (aka 4-seam fastball)

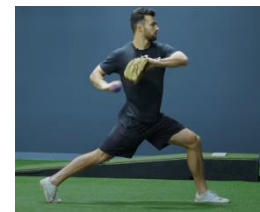
This is a terrific starting grip for youth. The 2 fingers go across the letter ‘C’ on the ball, the thumb goes under the ball. Leave space between the ball and your palm. Don’t squeeze tight, hold it like you’re holding a “bird”, tight enough that it can’t get out, but soft enough you don’t hurt it.



Review the Arm Motion

1.) “Circular” arm motion

Start with the ball in your glove and your throwing hand inside the glove holding the ball. The first motion when pulling the ball out of the glove is “thumb to thigh” to start the circular motion. Then proceed to “show it to the sky”, notice the ball is now actually facing up into the air, opposite the target. This is also referred to as the “Big T” or power position. Then finish the circle by coming down and across to the opposite side of the body.



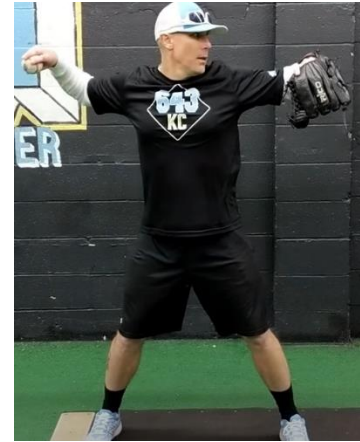
Pitching Drills

1.) “Split Stance” mound throws

Pitcher faces forward on the mound (like they’re already completed their rotation and are now delivering the ball to the plate). Back foot has heel up and toes on the front of the mound. Front leg is in a split stance toe forward towards home plate. Your glove tucked under your arm, your throwing hand up in an L shaped position. Then, without moving your feet at all (keep them glued to the ground), slightly rock back your body and arm, throw to the catcher, and ensure your throwing arm follows through, coming down across your body.

2.) “Stride Separation Leg Lift” mound throws

Pitcher faces sideways in stretch position with legs stride apart already, glove hand forward, throwing hand in back, both throwing and glove arms are raised into the “Big T” position. Head is turned towards home looking directly over your glove hand shoulder. Now keeping your upper body unchanged and your back foot on the ground, lift your front foot, place it back down, repeat 3 times, then on the 3rd time deliver a normal throw to home plate. Ensure follow-through.



3.) “Balance” mound throws

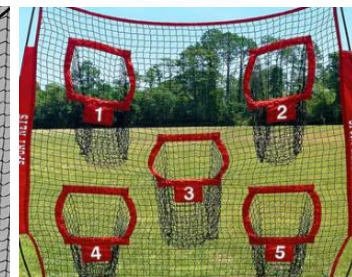
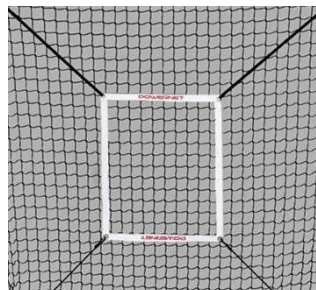
Pitcher faces sideways in stretch position but front leg is not extended, instead it is right next to the back foot. The glove is in front of the belly, the ball is in the glove, and throwing hand is in the glove holding onto the ball. Raise your front foot both out (3rd base side for a right-handed pitcher) and up a little (maybe 6 inches). Hold this balanced position, count out loud to 3, then finish and deliver the pitcher.



Target Practice

1.) Target Nets

One of the simplest and most effective ways for a youth to get better at pitching is ensuring they understand that the most important factor for them to be successful is to throw strikes. The best way to practice this is by attempting to, and successfully and repeatedly hitting a target. Allowing a youth to throw at any type of target, such as some of the nets pictured, will be very beneficial. You can play games with the youth, such as calling out a number and if they hit it they continue, if they don't they're eliminated. Or keep track of the pitch count, with the goal to get 3 strikes and strikeout the batter before they throw 3 balls and walk the batter. If you don't have access to a net, that's ok, then you get a catcher's mitt, use it as the target, and try to get the pitcher to get the mitt without the catcher needing to move it.



Learning other Pitches

It is very important to keep your youth safe and not introduce pitches that will injure the ligaments in their arms, such as curveballs. At a young age, learning how to throw strikes the single most important factor to being a successful pitcher. Secondary pitches do not become important until older ages such as high school. With that said, many youth players will try to throw multiple pitches anyways, so in those situations it is important to introduce safe secondary pitches such as the following.

1.) The “Two-Seam” Fastball

Young players are inclined to want to learn additional pitches. Already above, the main throw for every play and pitcher we teach is the “Four-Seam” fastball (the letter ‘C’ on the ball). The 2nd pitch to introduce is the “Two-Seam” fastball, which is thrown in the same arm motion, just with a different grip. The “Two-Seam” may be slightly slower than the “Four-Seam” but will appear to have more movement to the batter.



2.) The “Safe Change-up” (the “Palm Ball”)

It’s important, at a young age, to introduce safe pitches that will not damage or injure their arm. One such pitch you can introduce as they get older is a change-up, or the “palm ball”. It’s the same motion, just a different grip again. You jam the ball tight into the palm, and only wrap your thumb around. The other 4 fingers (all 4 fingers) are up in the air and do not touch the ball throughout the entire throw. If done correctly, this will significantly slow down the speed of the pitch, while deceiving the batter, and not injuring the arm.