Pitching Drills

Warm ups

Sometimes, the girls forget the “why” or they do not fully understand the purpose of what they are doing. We want to remind them why we are doing what we are doing and what we should be focusing on. I will explain in each drill the why and what we are focusing on so it is something if they were unsure how to ask, embarrassed, or simply didn’t think to ask, they will have the information!

Warm Ups

Finger Flips- We want to focus on the motion through our fingers while keeping our arms straight and not using our elbow to push the ball throw release. The balls shouldn't fly more than maybe 6 inches from wrist to glove or net. Set of 10-15

Half Rounds of 3 count- Making sure that our feet our shoulder width apart with our weight being stacked back (much light hitting) and our feet about 45*. Raise arms up (supinated- think of holding a bowl of soup) let gravity carry arms down, that is one. Arm back up, drop, that is two, Back up and on 3, releasing the ball. Focusing on release point at the hips. Set of 10-15

Front halves- Hands towards pitcher with feet in the same position as before, remember each drill is adding onto the one before it. Weight is still stacked back on drive leg. Move through the motion of the pitch focusing again on the release point and allowing the arm to be relaxed. Muscling through or forcing the ball out of our hands actually slows the arm down and doesnt allow a relaxed and proper finish. Set of 10

Move back- about 5 feet from rubber and move to full pitches at about 75* power. Set of 10

Now you are warm and ready for full distances.

SOFTBALL PITCHING MECHANICS

While it's true that different types of pitches will have slightly different finish to them – whether it's the stride length, snap of the wrist, or hip rotation – the beginning should always be the same. From the start of the pitch to the 'X' position we want our pitches to look almost identical, hiding the pitch until we have to tip our hand. It's important to emphasize how critical it is to stay nice and loose throughout the entire pitching motion. When a pitcher tightens up, the stiffness will reduce the whip created in the arm circle, resulting in a slower pitch. Put simply, the better the whip, the faster the ball. We'll begin with a discussion of the power line - an essential element for teaching proper mechanics. Next, we'll break down the pitching motion into 4 key phases: Grip, Stance and Presentation, Arm Circle and Stride, and Release and Follow Through. *POWER LINE* Before beginning any pitching workout, take a moment to draw a "power line" onto your practice area. This is simply a line directly from the middle of the pitcher's rubber down to the middle of the plate. A pitcher who steps straight ahead and lands with her stride foot on the line (preferably at a 30 to 45 degree angle) will be able to generate maximum power in that pitch. Pitchers who use the power line will also be better balanced, and have better command of their pitch locations. The power line can also act as your pitcher's compass, allowing her to adjust her aim to the east or west simply by stepping to the left or right of the power line as she executes the pitch.

Balance and Presentation

Most softball leagues will require a pitcher to approach the rubber from behind, so it's a good idea to practice this (especially with younger pitchers). Step onto the rubber from behind, with the hands apart, and the ball in your bare hand. This is called the "presentation" - showing the batter that you have the ball and are getting ready to pitch. The stance itself should be comfortable and relaxed. The pitcher's hips should be closed (parallel to the catcher). Her shoulders should be back and feet at around shoulder width apart. The feet must be placed where the league or association requires them to be. Typically, the push-off (or throwing side) foot must be at the front of the pitching rubber, with at least half of it on the surface of the rubber. The stride (or glove side) foot will usually be behind the rubber or touching the back edge of the rubber.

Grip

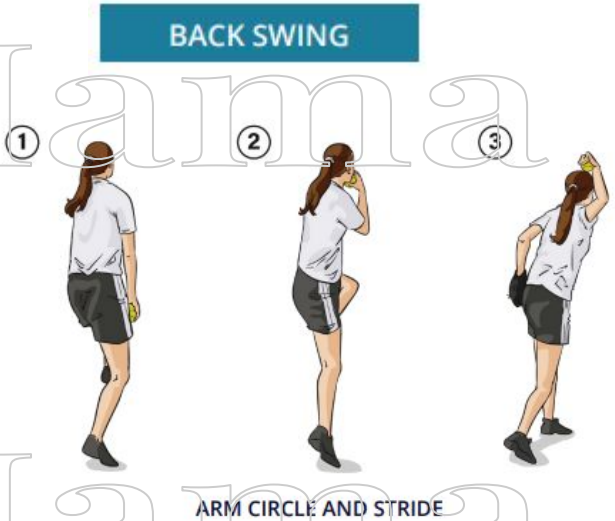
The pitcher can choose one of two possible fastball grips - either the “C” grip (or 4-seam grip) or the “Horseshoe” grip (or 2-seam grip). The “C” grip is usually recommended for new pitchers because it has no tailing action. The vertical rotation of all four seams forces the ball to hold a straight line from the pitcher’s hand to the catcher’s mitt. A two seam fastball will have the long seams of the ball rotating down, causing the ball to break slightly back toward the pitcher’s throwing arm. No matter what grip your pitcher chooses (and it’s a good idea to allow her to experiment with both), make sure she has a comfortable grip on the ball, with the pads of the fingers and thumb resting on the seams.

Fastball - C -Grip

Fastball - Horseshoe Grip

ARM CIRCLE AND STRIDE

After the presentation, the pitcher will bring the ball and glove together in front of the waist, and pause for at least one second (per the rules of your league or association). The arm circle begins with a back-swing of the pitching arm. Take the ball out of the glove and swing it back to approximately 9 o'clock, so the pitching arm is level with the ground. The speed of the back-swing is up to the pitcher - it's the speed of the arm circle that counts, so the back-swing can be slower if the pitcher prefers. As the pitching arm begins to move forward again, she will raise her stride leg and begin to drive forward off the rubber, using her push-off foot. As she extends her stride toward the plate, the pitching arm continues forward and completes a full windmill circle, staying relaxed and straight, but not stiff. The arm speed should be consistent and fast the whole way around. The timing of the stride will vary from pitcher to pitcher and from pitch to pitch, but generally the stride leg should be landing just after the pitching arm has come up past the head. It can be helpful to imagine the arm circle as a clock. When the glove and pitching hands separate, the glove should be at around 3 o'clock, and when the stride leg lands, the pitching arm should be somewhere between 10 and 12 o'clock. This is to ensure that the back side of the body has ample time to deliver momentum and power to the pitch before it's released.



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Also, much like how the dial stays in the middle of the clock as the hands go around in a circle, the head on our pitcher must stay balanced, centered firmly between her two feet. The body follows the lead of the head, and if the head is off-balance, it will throw off the entire pitching motion. As the pitcher drives off the rubber, pushing the stride leg out in front, the heel of her push-off foot should come up off the ground, leaving her toe in the dirt. This is how you know the pitcher is pushing off with all of her power, directing all of her energy down the power line and towards home plate. When the stride foot lands, it should be flat on the power line, at a 45 degree angle, with the knee flexed, but still firm. With the stride foot down, the pitching arm and drive leg will begin to lead the rest of the back side of the body in a continuous motion down the power line. The elbow will lead the whip of the throwing arm as it comes down through the circle, and the knee will lead the drive of the back leg as it moves forward and into the drag. A common and costly mistake at this point in the pitch is for pitchers to ignore the back leg movement. Doing so will not only decrease the efficiency of motion that would be gained by synchronizing the bottom and top halves of the body, but will also greatly increase the chance of injury due to the extra stress placed on the pitcher from throwing “all arm

Release and Follow Through

The final phase of the pitch is the release and follow through. As the arm comes down past the hip, keep the wrist back then allow it to whip forward at the precise instant the ball is released. Do not bend at the waist or lead with the head. The pitcher should stay tall and upright with her shoulders back and level - no dipping or leaning toward the throwing arm side. On the follow through, allow the arm to stay loose at the joint, and let the arm finish in a natural way. Some pitchers prefer to let the hand turn over in front of the body and dangle loosely at the wrist. While others prefer to finish with the arm bent upward in an L-shape, the elbow in front of the body and the hand pointing straight up. It's important to remember however that even if your pitcher leans toward the mechanical side of things, it's important that the arm stay loose at the joints, as staying tight in the elbow through the snap and release is not only unnecessary but could lead to elbow soreness or even injury. Regardless of the type of follow through, the pitcher should be balanced, in full control of her body and ready to make a play fielding the ball if necessary

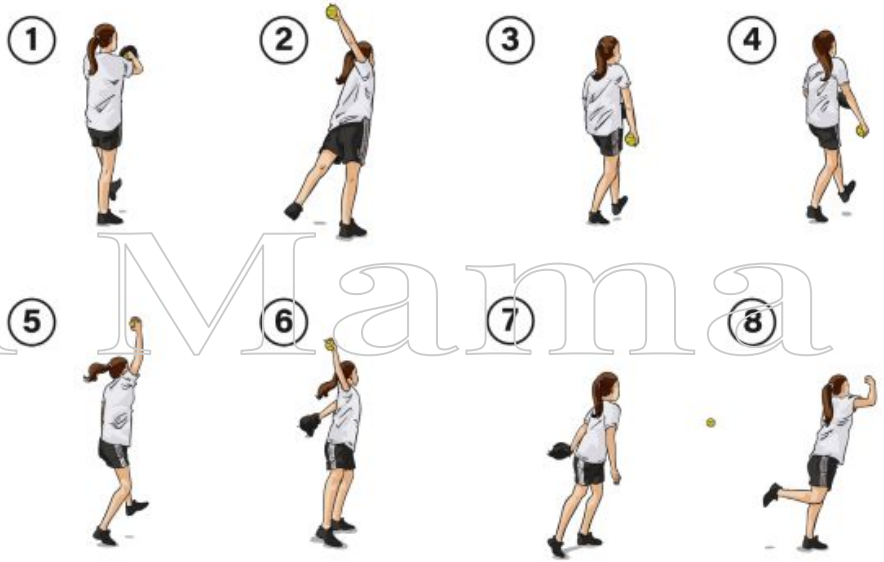
Leg Drive Drill

Purpose-This next drill is fantastic for improving a pitcher's balance, while teaching her how to aggressively pivot her hips and generate more power.

1 The pitcher will start on the mound with the hips closed (parallel to the catcher). She will be balancing on her push-off foot alone, with the stride leg straight and the stride foot raised six inches off the ground. The hands are together at waist level.

2 As she brings the pitching arm back she will also bring her stride leg back slightly, then kick forward into her arm circle and stride, while pushing aggressively off the back foot.

3 She will then complete the snap, release and follow through, while dragging the back foot.



Snap Drill

The goal of the Snap drill is to remove every other aspect of the pitch except the snap. This allows the pitcher to focus all of her energy on perfecting the art of a quick, tight snap; really feeling the ball peel off her fingers. The pitcher will stand about halfway between the mound and home plate, with a catcher at home plate.

1 The pitcher will start off with her hips open (perpendicular to the catcher) and her feet on the power line, running from her back toe to the front toe and directly towards the catcher.

2 The ball should be gripped using the “C” fastball grip. If you are using a weighted ball, the middle finger should be on the stripe down the middle.

3 The pitcher will swing her arm back to around 10 o’clock, then come back through and release the pitch, staying tight on the hip and coming through with a tight, short snap. Finish with a full follow through, allowing the forearm to come up towards the face. Complete 15 pitches with a weighted ball, or 25 pitches with a regulation ball.

Snap and Drag Drill

All pitchers will take a long step or “leap” out during the stride phase. However, girls softball rules do not allow a pitcher to become airborne during the pitch - it is illegal to have both feet in the air at the same time. That is why pitchers who use a “leaping” style must also “drag” the toe of the push-off foot on the ground until the stride foot touches down. Typically, this toe drag will be on the inside of the toe of the shoe, and will make an arc pattern in the dirt starting at the pitching rubber and continuing toward the glove side for a foot or more. In the Snap and Drag drill, we’re going to work on synchronizing the upper body and lower body - completing the snap, the stride and drag at the same time. The pitcher will stand about halfway between the mound and home plate, with a catcher at home plate

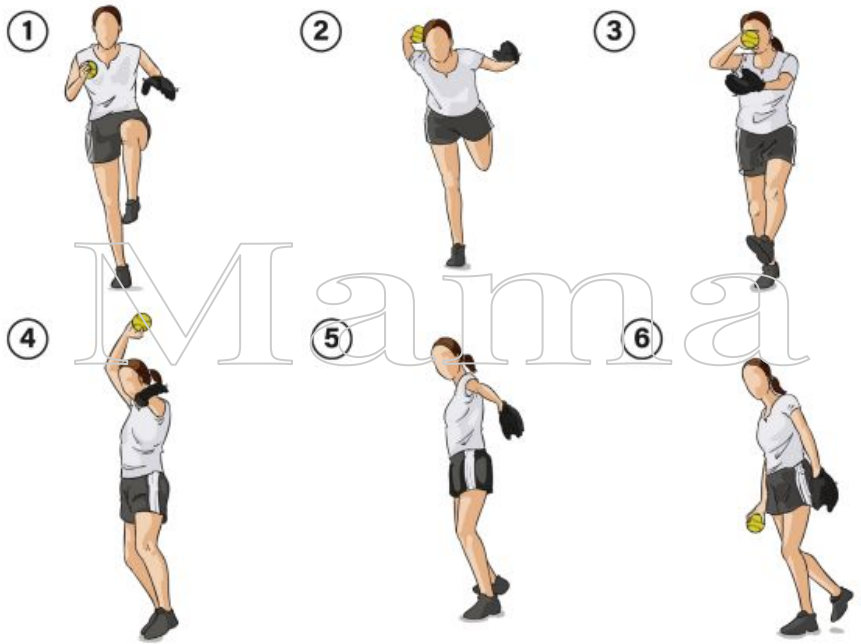
1 Begin in the same position as the Snap Drill, with the hips open (perpendicular to the catcher), feet on the power line and the ball in the “C” fastball grip.

2 The pitcher will start with her arms forward, then swing back to 180 degrees, stride forward, then drag the back foot through as she snaps and releases the ball. Complete 15 pitches with a weighted ball, or 25 pitches with a regulation ball.

Karate Kid Pitch

Purpose- This will help keep your pitcher on the power line with her stride, while pivoting aggressively and pushing off the back leg. The added difficulty of bringing the stride knee up will also challenge your pitchers balance and concentration.

Set up- Depending on the strength of the pitcher, this drill will be done either from in front of, or on the mound, with the catcher parked behind home plate.



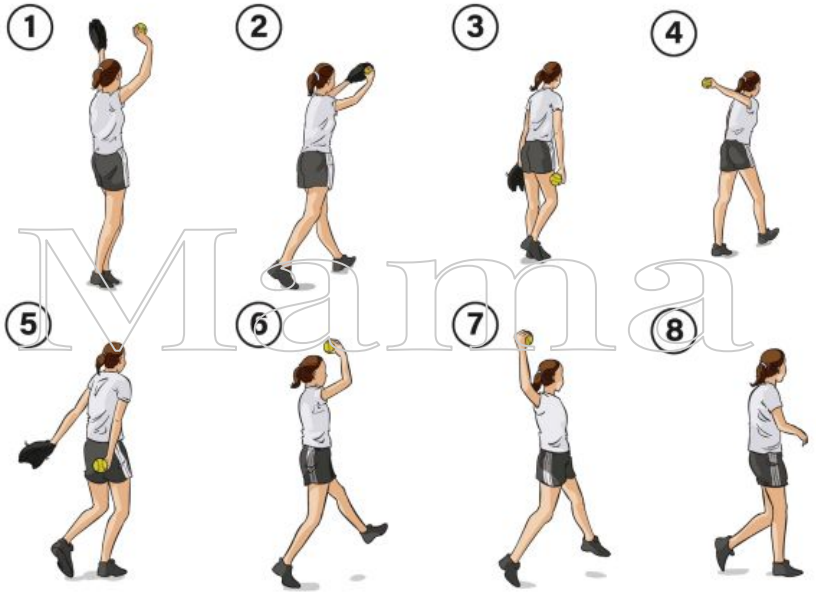
Walk Through Drill

Purpose-The walk through drill is a fantastic prepractice or pre-game warm up drill, and a great way for any pitcher to get into a good pitching rhythm. Walking into the pitch will help generate some momentum and allow the pitcher to work toward the full speed pitch in a safer, more natural way.

1 The pitcher begins with her hips closed, arms above her head, and stride foot slightly in front of the push off foot.

2 She will then walk into her full pitching motion, taking a small step with the stride foot, then another step with the push-off foot while bringing the pitching arm back.

3 Next, the pitcher goes into her arm circle and stride, pushing aggressively off the back foot, then completing the snap, release, follow through and drag.



Walk into Pivot

In this drill, we will teach the pitcher how to transfer weight from the back leg to the front leg using an aggressive stride. Generally speaking, pitchers who have a longer (and faster) stride tend to throw with more velocity. By emphasizing the long stride we force the pitcher to drive hard off the rubber with the push-off foot, and extend out toward the plate with more power. The pitcher will stand about halfway between the mound and home plate, with a catcher at home plate.

1 The pitcher will begin with her hips closed (parallel to the catcher), hands relaxed at her sides, holding the ball using the “C” fastball grip. The stride foot will be slightly ahead of the push-off foot.

2 She starts by “walking into” the power line, taking a short step with the push-off foot, then pivoting slightly to open her hips toward third base, while she takes a long, aggressive step with the stride foot.

3 During the stride, the arm will come back to 180 degrees. She will then whip the arm forward while closing her hips, release the ball and follow through while dragging the push off foot. Complete 15 pitches with a weighted ball, or 25 pitches with a regulation ball.

Transition Drill

This next drill will help us transition to making a full arm circle, while synchronizing the mechanics of the lower body with the upper body. Beginner pitchers should stand halfway between the plate and the mound, while intermediate or experienced pitchers can complete this drill from the full pitching distance. A catcher with full gear will be behind home plate. We'll ditch the weighted ball and use a regulation ball for this and any other drill that uses a full arm circle.

1 The pitcher will begin standing on the power line with the hips open, and hands together at waist level.

2 She starts by swinging the pitching arm back, then going through the complete arm circle motion while taking an aggressive stride.

3 She finishes the pitch with a tight snap, then follows through while dragging the push-off foot behind her. Complete 15-25 pitches using a regulation ball.

Power Drive Drill

This is a great drill for helping young pitchers increase their pitching velocity by recruiting more power from the legs and hips, and efficiently transferring it into the windmill pitching motion. The pitcher will stand on the mound with a regulation ball and a catcher behind the plate in full gear. As the drill progresses, the pitcher will step back behind the mound to gradually increase the throwing distance. You can also use a small cone to encourage a longer, more aggressive stride

1 The pitcher will begin standing on the power line with the hips open, and hands together at waist level.

2 She starts by swinging the pitching arm back, then going through the complete arm circle motion while taking an aggressive stride.

3 She finishes the pitch with a tight snap, then follows through while dragging the push-off foot behind her.

4 Throw 5-10 pitches from the mound, then take three giant steps back to increase the distance.

5 Throw 5-10 pitches from that position, then take three more giant steps back

6 Throw 5-10 pitches from the final position

Long Toss Drill

PURPOSE -The long toss drill is great for helping a pitcher get loose and build confidence, almost working like a resistance drill. After the pitcher has gone to the edge of her range with the long toss, stepping back to the mound and throwing strikes at the plate is a superb way to finish off any warm-up.

This drill runs similar to the walk through drill, but also adds in the challenge of throwing from increasing pitching distances. The pitcher will start off behind the mound with a regulation ball, slowly working backwards from that point. The catcher will stay behind the plate - however it can be helpful for them to stand up to increase their catch radius.

1 The pitcher begins with her hips closed, arms above her head, and stride foot slightly in front of the push off foot.

2 She will then walk into her full pitching motion, taking a small step with the stride foot, then another step with the push-off foot while bringing the pitching arm back.

3 Next, the pitcher goes into her arm circle and stride, pushing aggressively off the back foot, then completing the snap, release, follow through and drag.

4 The pitcher will throw two walk through pitches from this location then take three giant steps back and throw two more.

5 She will continue increasing the distance, three steps at a time, until she is at the very edge of her pitching range, just short of where she would need to one hop the pitch. Here, at the edge of hers range have her deliver ten more pitches to the plate

6 Finally, have her step back to the mound and throw ten strikes from there to finish off the drill.

Rapid Fire Drill

Purpose-If you have a pitcher who has mechanical issues that stem from over thinking (such as pushing the ball, slowing down through the wind-up, or overaiming), this next drill does a great job of forcing the pitcher to stop thinking and just pitch. Aside from the benefits of fixing broken mechanics, it's also a fantastic endurance drill.

The pitcher will stand at the mound with a partner (parent, coach or another player), and a bucket of 25 balls. The catcher will be behind home plate.

1 The pitcher will go through her full pitching motion, focusing on getting through the 25 balls as quickly as possible.

2 Immediately after each pitch the catcher will discard that ball, while the pitcher receives a new ball from the bucket.

Hit the Box Drill

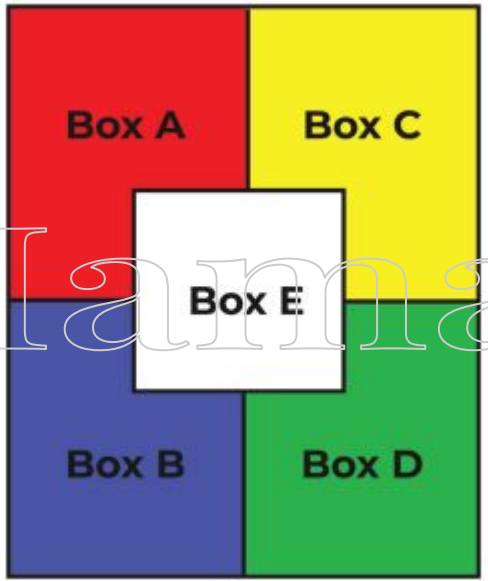
Purpose-This next drill teaches players how to keep the ball down and improve accuracy. We do this by providing them with a visual strike zone – the size of a piece of paper– that is much smaller than a normal strike zone.

With everything in position, the pitcher will then begin to throw pitches from regulation distance, trying to hit the box. The pitcher will be imagining each set of 6 pitches as an at bat, with the goal to throw three strikes before walking the batter.

For this drill to work best, you want to find a hill with a slight incline. For the target, we use a computer paper box for 8.5 by 11 paper, but if you can't find one, any small box can work as a target. You're also going to need a stool or a chair to put the box on, ideally about a foot off the ground. Then measure out your regulation pitching distance down the hill from the box, and have your pitcher line up there. Once the pitchers have gotten the hang of the drill, you can even move them back slightly.

Four Corners Drill

The purpose of the four corners drill is to teach your pitcher how to control and locate her fastball all over the plate. She should be maintaining her mechanics, coming through with a tight quick snap, and aiming inside and outside by moving their stride foots placement on the power line appropriately.



Set up- The pitcher will line up at the mound, with the catcher behind home plate. You also have the option of having a coach stand in the batter's box (with a helmet) to better simulate throwing the ball inside and outside.

To start off, our pitcher is going to assume they are facing a right handed batter. Using just the fastball, the pitcher will then go on and work the four corners of the plate, starting off high and outside in Box A. Next, the pitcher will throw low and outside, to Box B, high and inside to Box C, and then low and inside to Box D. The pitcher will finish off the round by throwing a fastball right down the middle to Box E. The pitcher will not move on to the next box until they have successfully thrown a strike in the box

Basketball Target Drill

Here we have a great drill for teaching your pitcher control. By giving our pitcher a visual target for them to hit, we end up with a great drill for improving both accuracy and velocity.

For this drill our pitcher is going to stand at the mound, and we'll place a basketball onto a batting tee on home plate.

The pitchers will then proceed to throw fastballs at home plate, trying to knock the basketball off the tee.

This drill works great as a competition as well – you can set your pitchers up in a line, put five minutes on the clock, and then have the pitchers compete to see who can knock the ball off the tee the most times. Or even set up two lines, each with their own tee, and make it a competition between the two teams to get the most balls knocked off the tee.

Velocity Drills

The following drills are focused on increasing fastball speed and power by working on the individual elements of the pitching motion, from the leg drive, to the arm circle to the whip.

Wall Throws

Purpose- This drill focuses on increasing speed by generating a faster arm circle and whip before the release. Pitchers stand as close to a wall as possible while still being able to complete the entire arm circle freely. For safety, this drill should use a softie instead of a regular ball.

1 The pitcher will begin with her hips open to the wall, back swing, complete the arm circle and pitch the ball as hard and fast as she can into the wall. Focus on putting 100% power behind each pitch, which will translate to more speed.

2 After 5 pitches directly into the wall, take one step back and continue the drill. Take another 5 pitches, then an additional step back.

3 When the pitcher a point where the ball is losing velocity before it contacts the wall, take a step back in and complete the set from that position. Complete 20-25 pitches.

Circle Speed Drill

Purpose-This drill improves a pitcher's arm rotation speed, which will increase her arm strength, flexibility and fastball velocity.

The pitcher will stand halfway between the mound and home plate (or at the mound for older players), with a regulation ball and a catcher behind home plate.

Begin with the hips open to the catcher, and stride foot extended slightly more than shoulder width ahead of the push off foot. The glove hand should be at shoulder height (3 o'clock on the Arm Circle clock we used earlier). 2 Make three fast circles with the pitching arm, and release the ball on the third rotation. Repeat for five reps. 3 Next, make two fast circles and release the ball on the second rotation. Repeat for five reps. 4 Finally, make one circle and release the ball on the first rotation. Repeat for five reps

Rug Drill

Purpose-This next drill is a great option for working on improving velocity when your pitcher doesn't have the luxury of throwing pitches outdoors

Your pitcher will need a big heavy tarp or carpet, and a something she can hang it over, like an exposed beam in the basement or a rafter in the garage.

With the tarp set up, the pitcher just needs to stand in front of it and, using her full pitching motion, throw as hard as she can. While we want to maintain solid mechanics, don't worry about too much about control – just throw the pitch with everything you can muster. Complete 2-4 sets of 25 pitches.

Stride Extender Drill

This next drill is a fantastic way to teach a pitcher how to use her body to generate more speed and power. Many pitchers make the mistake of pitching with just their arms, severely limiting their pitching power.

The pitcher will pitch from her normal position at the mound, but you'll need a coach with some tape as well as a catcher at home plate for this drill.

The drill will begin with the pitcher throwing a fastball to home plate. After the first pitch has been thrown, the coach will step in and place a piece of tape where the drive food landed. Now the pitcher will go back to the mound and pitch again, however this time the pitcher must have their drive foot land beyond that piece of tape. The pitcher will continue doing this, continuing to throw strikes and move forward until they reach the edge of the circle.

Step Back Throw Drill

Up next we have another drill that will help to increase pitching power. By moving the pitcher back away from the mound and then forward back to it, we force her to increase her leg drive as the distance increases, as she will be unable to reach the plate otherwise. Then, when she's moving back in, she will use that same extra leg drive she discovered from the farthest distance and apply it to the shorter pitch, increasing velocity.

This is another fastball drill, kicked off by the pitcher throwing her first strike from the mound. After the first strike, she'll take five steps back and throw a strike from there. It's important the pitcher maintain her natural pitching motion, focusing on increasing the distance on her pitches with her legs. After throwing a strike from five steps behind the mound, she'll take another five steps back, putting her 10 steps back in total. She'll throw another strike there, and then move another five steps back, continuing this cycle until she gets to second base. Once she's thrown a strike from second base, she'll begin working in the opposite direction, moving forward five steps after each strike thrown. Once the pitcher has gone to second base and back to the mound, she has completed one rep. To complete the drill, she will make that trip a total of three times to finish up the drill.

Game Preparation Drills

The following drills are designed to simulate a game situation, and involve some added mental pressure that comes from throwing balls and strikes against a real (or imagined) batter.

20-4 drills

PURPOSE The 20-4 drill (or 10-3 drill) works on accuracy and control, while building confidence. The pitcher will stand halfway between the mound and home plate (or at the mound for older players), with a regulation ball and a catcher behind home plate.

The goal of this drill is to throw 20 strikes for every 4 balls pitched. If the pitcher is unable to reach 20 strikes before throwing 4 balls, the drill starts over. For younger players, the goal is throw 10 strikes for every 3 balls.

Dummy Batter Drill

This drill will help pitchers work on the control in a game-like situation, without risking a real batter getting hit by a pitch.

Create or purchase a cutout shape of a batter in her stance, and place it in the batter's box. The pitcher stands on the mound with a regulation ball, and a catcher in full gear behind home plate. As an alternative, you can create pitching targets and attach them to a fence or wall, then place the dummy batter next to them.

1 The pitcher will go through her complete pitching motion while trying to hit specific spots in relation to the dummy batter. The catcher will indicate a target inside the strike zone using her glove, the receive the pitch.

2 Begin by throwing fastballs, then move onto changeups, then breaking pitches. Always trying to hit the spot indicated by the catcher (or wall/fence target).

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Conditioning Drills

In past years, a lot of attention has been directed toward addressing arm injuries in baseball. The conventional wisdom has been that baseball pitching puts undue strain on the arm while softball pitching is a more “natural” motion. But recent studies suggest that the windmill pitching motion is far from “natural” and actually places stresses on the arm and shoulder similar to the overhand throw. This shouldn’t be a surprise. Any explosive movement that’s repeated over and over will wear out the muscles, tendons and ligaments of the body, especially if they are not properly conditioned to begin with. The following section covers four proven drills that will help to strengthen the pitcher’s entire kinetic chain, from the stride and push-off foot, to the core, to the upper body, shoulder, arm and wrist. All of these exercises are designed to help softball pitchers specifically, but you can also augment them with traditional exercises like push-ups, planks, and crunches.

Single Leg Squats

This is a challenging exercise designed to help a pitcher improve her power and balance. A steady diet of single leg squats will have your pitcher not only exploding off the drive leg with more power, but also landing on the stride leg with more stability. All the pitcher needs for this next drill is an open area where she can move around without anything in the way.

1 The pitcher will go up onto one leg and bring the hands in tight, then slowly squat down as far she can go.

2 Keep the weight roughly in the middle of your foot, basically on the ball, with the hips and shoulders both even and level. Repeat for 3 sets of 10 on each leg, building up the reps as the athlete builds strength.

LUNGE WITH UPPER BODY ROTATION

PURPOSE While some pitchers may have good core strength when in traditional positions, core control while outstretched onto the stride leg and delivering a pitch is where it counts. This next drill is focused on just that, improving the strength of the abdomen while the lower body is extended.

The pitcher will need about 10-15 feet to complete this as a walking lunge – but it can also be done while staying in the same position if necessary. As you progress with this drill, you can also incorporate a light weight - anywhere from 5-10 pounds is fine if shoulder strength is sufficient.

1 Starting from an athletic position, the pitcher will lunge forward, far enough that she gets a 90 degree bend in both legs on each stride.

2 At the bottom of the lunge, the pitcher will extend her arms out straight and rotate at the waist from side to side, first to the stride foot side, then the push off foot side, then back to the middle before stepping forward again.

3 Throughout the entire exercise, the shoulders and hips should remain level, with the chest up, shoulders back and core engaged. Start with 3 sets of 10-15 reps, and increase either the reps or weight as you build strength and the drill gets easier.

Newspaper drill

Grip strength is very important for all pitchers, and can become an even bigger factor when it comes to learning breaking pitches. This next drill focuses on improving the pitcher's strength in the forearm and hands. All your pitcher will need to do for this drill is put a large stack of newspapers somewhere in their home that they walk by on a consistent basis.

This drill is fairly simple. Whenever your pitcher walks by the stack of newspapers, she grabs one sheet and balls it up with her pitching hand. It will give her a light burn at first, but by the end of the day she'll have done a fair bit to increase her strength without even interrupting her routine.

Wrist Snap Drills

In this drill, we will develop strength in the wrist snap, by completely isolating it from the rest of the pitch. The pitcher will stand around 5 feet from a wall or partner with a regular ball or softie ball.

1 The pitcher begins with her hips open to the target and feet shoulder width apart.

2 With the non-throwing hand, hold the forearm of the pitching arm just above the wrist.

3 Cock the pitching hand back and snap it forward, attempting to hit the wall as hard as you can. Complete 3 sets of 10-15 reps.

TROUBLESHOOTING DRILLS

No matter how much you focus on the fundamentals, it’s very common for young pitchers to develop bad habits or mechanical glitches. Below are three of the most common mistakes pitchers make, and some simple drills you can use to correct them.

Front Side Breaking Down

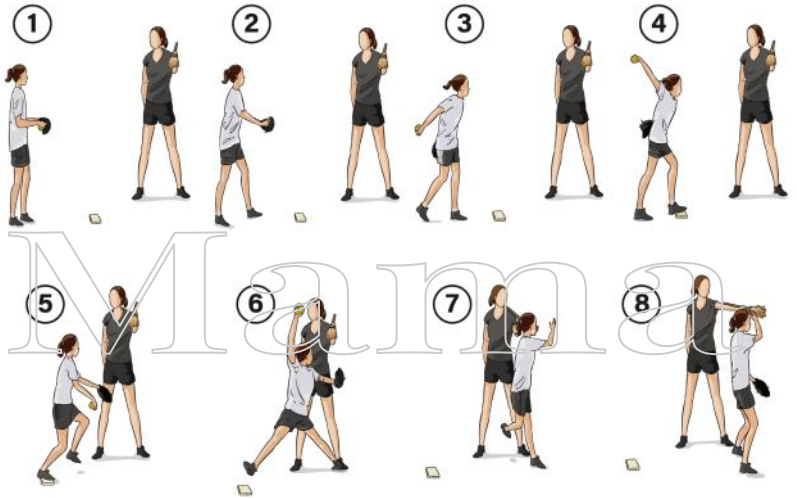
PROBLEM #1: HOW TO FIX IT To fix this, practice running the Snap Drill, while paying special attention to the landing of the stride foot. The pitcher needs to keep a firm front side, similar to how a hitter keeps a firm stride foot to generate more power in the swing. At impact, the stride leg should have the knee slightly bent to cushion the landing, as the pitcher's weight is temporarily shifted forward. But then, just as in hitting, the pitcher will need to "block" the stride leg and push back against it. At the exact point the pitch leaves her hand the stride leg should be straightened out and at an angle of around 20 degrees. The shoulders should be mostly closed (parallel to the catcher) and the hips should be around halfway closed. After the follow through, the hips will close completely and the pitcher will assume the fielding "ready" position.

To get more speed behind your fastball, it's essential to have a "push-back" against the stride leg during the release phase. This provides the resistance for the action of the arm as it goes through the final downswing into the release of the pitch. If a pitcher's stride leg is bent at landing, it's virtually impossible to throw a powerful pitch.

PROBLEM #2: LEADING WITH THE HEAD

Another issue that arises, especially in younger pitchers, is being bent at the waist, leaning forward and leading with the head (instead of leading with the stride foot).

HOW TO FIX IT Standing a couple feet in front of the mound on the pitcher's glove side, hold out either a broomstick, pool noodle or other (safe) object at about eye level for the pitcher. The pitcher will then go through her pitching motion, with this obstacle serving as a mental reminder not to lead with the head. We don't want any contact with the object, so make sure you've positioned yourself far enough in front that that won't happen, but close enough that the pitcher knows not to bend at the waist.



BROOMSTICK DRILL

PROBLEM #3: BAD ARM CIRCLE

Our third trouble shooting drill is for helping a pitcher who struggles with the mechanics of the arm-circle. The correct trajectory is with the arm coming up by the ear, reaching tall at the top, coming down off the ear, and then tight to the body as it comes down into the hip area.

HOW TO FIX IT Most pitchers who have this problem tend to start the arm circle off too wide, making it difficult to get back on the correct axis as they go into the whip and release. One simple solution for this is to practice pitching a wall or fence on the pitching arm side. Simply have the pitcher do the walk through drill from this position and they will be forced to stay properly aligned as they come up and down through the pitching motion.

This can be done with a ball in a long sock and it will also help with the pitcher being relaxed and smooth in her motion.

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Bucket Drill

The bucket drill is to teach the stride leg to get out in front of our body and allow weight to stay transferred back to the drive foot. Pitch half circles or full with leg on a cone or bucket to feel the difference.

Links to videos

Coming soon with more drills tailored to each girl

Warm ups- Routines

Before we get started, it's important for coaches and parents to understand the importance of pitch counts in a typical workout. There is no "magic" pitch count limit that experts agree on, but limiting the number of pitches thrown in a workout and the number of workouts per week is definitely prudent. Generally speaking, we like to limit pitchers 12 and under to 100 pitches per workout (including warmups). Assuming 2-3 workouts and 1-2 games per week, that's roughly 400 pitches per week at a maximum. Pitchers 13 and older can usually handle around 100-150 pitches per workout or game (including warmups). Assuming 3 workouts and 2 games per week, that's roughly 600 pitches per week at a maximum. The number of pitches will be even lower if a weighted ball is used. This is a rough guide! Pitchers should always ice their arms after practices and games whether it hurts or not. And they should never throw through pain. Each one of these workouts is designed for a 20-40 minute practice session. You can complete them as part of a team practice, a group workout with multiple pitchers, or a solo workout with an individual athlete.

CONDITIONING WORKOUT

Players Required	Pitcher and partner or catcher
Workout Time	Approx 20 minutes
Equipment Required	Weighted ball, regulation ball, glove, home plate

Drill	Skill Focus	Repetitions	Coaching Notes
Snap Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10 (weighted)	Look for 12 to 6 spin on the ball
Snap and Drag Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10 (weighted)	Shoulders stay level. No dipping to throwing side
Walk Into Pivot Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10 (weighted)	Stride should be 90-120% of height
Transition Drill	Mechanics	2 x 10	Stride foot lands on power line at 45 degree angle
Rapid Fire Drill	Mechanics	1 x 25	Try to beat your time on the second set

BASIC WORKOUT #1

Players Required	Pitcher and partner or catcher
Workout Time	Approx 20 minutes

Equipment Required	Weighted ball, regulation ball, glove, home plate

Drill	Skill Focus	Repetitions	Coaching Notes
Snap Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10 (weighted)	Look for 12 to 6 spin on the ball
Snap and Drag Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10 (weighted)	Shoulders stay level. No dipping to throwing side
Walk Into Pivot Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10 (weighted)	Stride should be 90-120% of height
Transition Drill	Mechanics	2 x 10	Stride foot lands on power line at 45 degree angle
Rapid Fire Drill	Mechanics	1 x 25	Try to beat your time on the second set

BASIC WORKOUT #2

Players Required	Pitcher and partner or catcher
Workout Time	Approx 30 minutes
Equipment Required	Weighted ball, regulation ball, glove, home plate

Drill	Skill Focus	Repetitions	Coaching Notes
Snap Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10 (weighted)	Look for 12 to 6 spin on the ball
Transition Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10	Stride foot lands on power line at 45 degree angle
Rapid Fire Drill	Mechanics	1 x 25	Focus on speed while maintaining mechanics
20-4 Drill	Game Preparation	3 attempts	Adjust to 10-3 for younger pitchers
Time Set Drill	Game Preparation	3 x 3 minutes	For beginners, focus on throwing strikes
Three Outs Drill	Game Preparation	1 inning of 3 outs	Visualize each pitch before throwing

BASIC WORKOUT #3

Players Required	Pitcher and partner or catcher
Workout Time	Approx 40 minutes
Equipment Required	Weighted ball, regulation ball, glove, home plate

Drill	Skill Focus	Repetitions	Coaching Notes
Single Leg Squats	Conditioning	2 x 10 each leg	Use a broomstick or doorway for balance if necessary
Lunge with Rotation	Conditioning	2 x 10 steps	Add the 5lb weight for final set
Transition Drill	Mechanics	3 x 15	Stride foot lands on power line at 45 degree angle
Power Drive Drill	Mechanics	1 x 15	5 pitches from 3 spots
Basketball Target Drill	Control	3 x 15	Use a smaller ball to increase difficulty
Walk Through Drill	Mechanics	2 x 15	Firm up the stride leg as the ball leaves the hand

INTERMEDIATE WORKOUT #1

Players Required	Pitcher and partner or catcher
Workout Time	Approx 20 minutes
Equipment Required	Weighted ball, regulation ball, glove, home plate

Drill	Skill Focus	Repetitions	Coaching Notes
Snap Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10 (weighted)	Look for 12 to 6 spin on the ball
Walk Into Pivot Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10 (weighted)	Stride should be 90-120% of height
Transition Drill	Mechanics	2 x 15	Stride foot lands on power line at 45 degree angle
Power Drive Drill	Mechanics	1 x 15	10 pitches from 3 spots
Rapid Fire Drill	Mechanics	1 x 20	Try to beat your time on the second set
Walk Through Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10	Firm up the stride leg as the ball leaves the hand

INTERMEDIATE WORKOUT #2

Players Required	Pitcher and partner or catcher
Workout Time	Approx 30 minutes

Equipment Required	Weighted ball, regulation ball, glove, home plate

Drill	Skill Focus	Repetitions	Coaching Notes
Single Leg Squats	Conditioning	3 x 10 each leg	Use a broomstick or doorway for balance if necessary
Lunge with Rotation	Conditioning	3 x 10 steps	Add the 5lb weight for final set
Wrist Snap Strengthening	Conditioning	2 x 10	Start close, then take a step back for final set
Transition Drill	Mechanics	2 x 15	Stride foot lands on power line at 45 degree angle
Power Drive Drill	Mechanics	1 x 30	10 pitches from 3 spots
Rapid Fire Drill	Mechanics	1 x 25	Try to beat your time on the second set
Walk Through Drill	Mechanics	2 x 15	Firm up the stride leg as the ball leaves the hand

INTERMEDIATE WORKOUT #3

Players Required	Pitcher and partner or catcher
Workout Time	Approx 40 minutes
Equipment Required	Weighted ball, regulation ball, glove, home plate, basketball, tee, stool, small cardboard box

Drill	Skill Focus	Repetitions	Coaching Notes
Snap Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10 (weighted)	Look for 12 to 6 spin on the ball
Transition Drill	Mechanics	2 x 15	Stride foot lands on power line at 45 degree angle
Hit the Box Drill	Control	2 x 15	Aim for a target 12 inches off the ground
Basketball Target Drill	Control	2 x 15	Use a smaller ball to increase difficulty
Circle Speed Drill	Velocity	2 x 10	Adequate warmup and stretching is a must
Stride Extender Drill	Velocity	3 x 5	Drive hard off the push-off foot
Step Back Throw	Velocity	2 x 10	See if the pitcher can successfully throw a strike from each spot using the fewest pitches possible

ADVANCED WORKOUT #1

Players Required	Pitcher and partner or catcher
Workout Time	Approx 30 minutes
Equipment Required	Weighted ball, regulation ball, glove, home plate

Drill	Skill Focus	Repetitions	Coaching Notes
Snap Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10 (weighted)	Look for 12 to 6 spin on the ball
Transition Drill	Mechanics	2 x 10	Stride foot lands on power line at 45 degree angle
Leg Drive Drill	Mechanics	2 x 10	10 pitches from 3 spots
Rapid Fire Drill	Mechanics	2 x 25	Try to beat your time on the second set
Karate Kid Drill	Mechanics	2 x 10	Head stays relaxed and straight
Walk Through Drill	Mechanics	2 x 10	Hips go closed, open, closed through the delivery
Long Toss Drill	Mechanics	1 set to edge of range and back	Use as much loft as necessary

ADVANCED WORKOUT #2

Players Required	Pitcher and partner or catcher
Workout Time	Approx 45 minutes
Equipment Required	Weighted ball, regulation ball, glove, home plate

Drill	Skill Focus	Repetitions	Coaching Notes
Single Leg Squats	Conditioning	3 x 10 each leg	Use a broomstick or doorway for balance if necessary
Lunge with Rotation	Conditioning	3 x 10 steps	Add the 5lb weight for final set
Wrist Snap Strengthening	Conditioning	2 x 10	Start close, then take a step back for final set
Snap Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10 (weighted)	Look for 12 to 6 spin on the ball
Transition Drill	Mechanics	2 x 10	Stride foot lands on power line at 45 degree angle
Karate Kid Drill	Mechanics	2 x 15	Head stays relaxed and straight
Walk Through Drill	Mechanics	2 x 15	Hips go closed, open, closed through the delivery
Long Toss Drill	Mechanics	1 set to edge of range and back	Use as much loft as necessary

ADVANCED WORKOUT #3

Players Required	Pitcher and partner or catcher
Workout Time	Approx 60 minutes
Equipment Required	Weighted ball, regulation ball, glove, home plate, basketball, tee

Drill	Skill Focus	Repetitions	Coaching Notes
Single Leg Squats	Conditioning	3 x 15 each leg	Use a broomstick or doorway for balance
Lunge with Rotation	Conditioning	3 x 15 steps	5-10 lb weight on each set
Wrist Snap Strengthening	Conditioning	2 x 10	Start close, then take a step back for final set
Snap Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10 (weighted)	Look for 12 to 6 spin on the ball
Transition Drill	Mechanics	2 x 15	Stride foot lands on power line at 45 degree angle
Four Corners Drill	Control	3 sets hitting all 5 spots	Try this as a competitive drill between teams of pitchers
Basketball Target Drill	Control	3 x 15	Use a smaller ball to increase difficulty
Stride Extender Drill	Velocity	3 x 5	Drive hard off the push-off foot
Step Back Throw	Velocity	2 x 10	See if the pitcher can successfully throw a strike from each spot using the fewest pitches possible

CONTROL WORKOUT

Players Required	Pitcher and partner or catcher
Workout Time	Approx 30 minutes
Equipment Required	Weighted ball, regulation ball, glove, home plate, basketball, tee, stool, small cardboard box

Drill	Skill Focus	Repetitions	Coaching Notes
Snap Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10 (weighted)	Look for 12 to 6 spin on the ball
Snap and Drag Drill	Mechanics	1 x 10 (weighted)	Shoulders stay level. No dipping to throwing side
Transition Drill	Mechanics	2 x 15	Stride foot lands on power line at 45 degree angle
Hit the Box Drill	Control	2 x 15	Aim for a target 12 inches off the ground
Four Corners Drill	Control	3 sets hitting all 5 spots	Try this as a competitive drill between teams of pitchers
Basketball Target Drill	Control	2 x 15	Use a smaller ball to increase difficulty

VELOCITY WORKOUT

Players Required	Pitcher and partner or catcher
Workout Time	Approx 30 minutes
Equipment Required	Weighted ball, regulation ball, glove, home plate, empty wall, tape

Drill	Skill Focus	Repetitions	Coaching Notes
Transition Drill	Mechanics	2 x 15	Stride foot lands on power line at 45 degree angle
Walk Through Drill	Mechanics	2 x 15	Hips go closed, open, closed through the delivery
Wall Throws	Velocity	2 x 10	
Circle Speed Drill	Velocity	2 x 10	Adequate warmup and stretching is a must
Stride Extender Drill	Velocity	3 x 5	Drive hard off the push-off foot
Step Back Throw	Velocity	2 x 10	See if the pitcher can successfully throw a strike from each spot using the fewest pitches possible

Softball Mama

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