



ESSENTIAL SOFTBALL
PITCHING GRIPS

**12 CRITICAL PITCHES EVERY
FASTPITCH COACH SHOULD KNOW**

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Introduction

Pitching can be a difficult skill to master. There are many factors that contribute to a great pitch including a pitcher's stance, grip, backswing, weight transfer, stride, arm rotation, wrist snap, release and follow through. That's a lot of motions that must be coordinated in just the right way (and in under two seconds) to throw a specific pitch!

While there is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to throw a pitch, and every pitcher has to develop her own style, there are fundamental mechanics that must be learned to ensure accuracy, success and prevent injuries.

Your job as a coach is to help your pitcher develop good mechanics before moving on to control, speed and accuracy.

In this guide we will cover the basic fundamentals of pitching and the proper mechanics of nine specific pitches. Each section covers a different pitch, in the order they should be taught, and includes recommended grips, the delivery of the pitch and related coaching tips.

Let's learn some pitches!

Fundamentals

While it's true that each type of pitch has a slightly different finish – 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 doesn't matter if you have the best drop ball in the world – if the batter knows it's a drop ball as soon as the pitcher begins her stride, the pitch has already lost most of its effectiveness.

Let's review the **Power Line** - an essential element for teaching proper mechanics. Then we will 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 to the middle of the plate.



Power Line - Before Stride



Power Line - After Stride

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 be better balanced and have better command of their pitch locations.

Phase 1: Grip

Every pitcher should begin by mastering the basic 4-seam grip. With this grip, your fingers use the seams of the ball to pull down, achieving the maximum backward rotation.

- **4-Seam Grip** (or "C" Grip)– Place the pads of your fingers *across* the stitches of "horseshoe." The stitches will form a "C" when viewed from above.
- It doesn't matter how you pick up the ball. You are never more than a quarter turn from the 4-seam grip.



Basic "C" or 4-Seam Grip

Once the pitcher is comfortable with the 4-seam grip she can move on to learning more technical grips.

Phase 2: Stance and Presentation

Most softball leagues will require a pitcher to approach the rubber from behind, so it's a good idea to always practice this way (especially with younger pitchers).

Presentation

1. Step onto the rubber from behind.

2. Keep the hands apart and at your sides with the ball in your bare hand. This action shows the batter that you are getting ready to pitch.

Stance

1. The stance should be comfortable and relaxed and the hips should be closed (parallel to the catcher).
2. The shoulders should be back and feet shoulder width apart.
3. 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.



Proper Stance

Phase 3 - Arm Circle and Stride

It's important to stay 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.

The better the whip, the faster the ball.

Arm Circle and Stride

1. 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).
 - Keep the hands low.
2. The arm circle begins with a backswing of the pitching arm. Take the ball out of the glove and swing it back to approximately 9 o'clock so that the pitching arm is level with the ground.
 - The speed of the backswing is up to the pitcher - it's the speed of the arm circle that counts -- so the backswing can be slower if the pitcher prefers.
3. As the pitching arm begins to move forward again, raise the stride leg and begin to drive forward off the rubber, using your push-off foot.



Backswing

4. As you extend the 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 pitch to pitch, but generally the stride leg should be landing just after the pitching arm has come up past the head.
5. As you drive off the rubber, pushing the stride leg out in front, the heel of your push-off foot should come up off the ground, leaving your 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.



Arm Circle and Stride in Motion

6. Once the stride foot lands, it should be flat on the power line, at a 45 degree angle, with the knee flexed and 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.
7. 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.
 - Do not ignore the back leg movement. This will only decrease the efficiency of the motion and greatly increase the chance of injury due to the extra stress placed on the pitcher from throwing with "all arm."

Arm Circle Clock

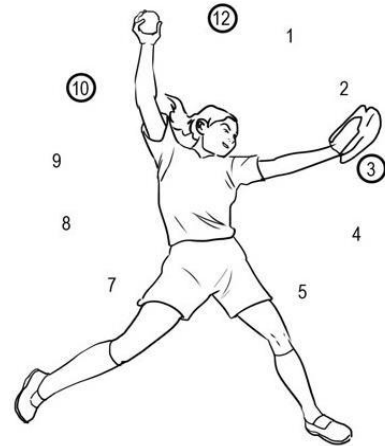
It can be helpful to imagine the arm circle as a clock.

- When the glove and pitching hands separate, the glove should be at 3 o'clock.
- 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.

Just like the dial stays in the middle of the clock as the hands go around in a circle, the pitcher's head must also stay balanced and 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.



Arm Circle Clock - "X" Position

Phase 4 - Release and Follow Through

The final phase of the pitch is the release and follow through. Several things need to occur at the same time as the arm swings back down to the release point.

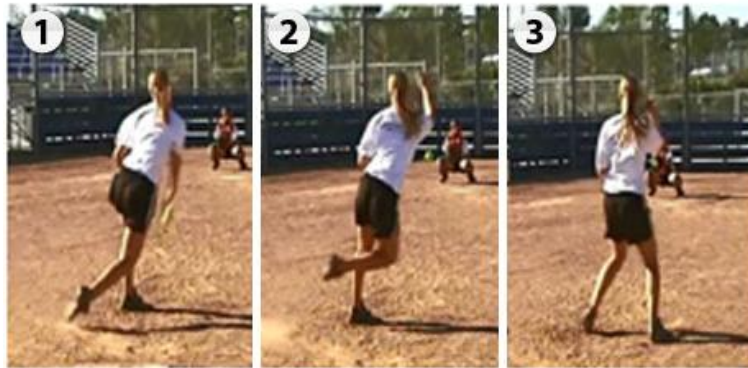
Release

1. 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.
 - Keep the arm outstretched and do not snap the wrist.
 - Do not bend at the waist or lead with the head. This will slow down the velocity of the pitch.
 - Stay tall and upright with your shoulders back and level - no dipping or leaning toward the throwing arm side.

Follow Through

1. 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 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.



Release and Follow Through

Fastball

The fastball is the foundation that the entire house of pitching is built upon. Before a pitcher can move on to any other pitches, like rise and drop pitches, she must learn how to control the fastball consistently.

The fastball accounts for about 75% of all pitches. Even if your pitcher is throwing a simple change up or a rise curve, we want the batter to think “fastball” for as long as possible.

Grip

The pitcher can choose one of two possible fastball grips - either the 4-seam grip (**"C" Grip**) or the 2 seam (**Horseshoe Grip**).

- The **"C" Grip** is recommended for a new pitcher 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.
- The **Horseshoe Grip** will have the long seams of the ball rotating down, causing the ball to break slightly back toward the pitcher's throwing arm.



Fastball - C-Grip



Fastball - Horseshoe Grip

No matter which 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.

Delivery

1. Stand comfortably with her feet shoulder width apart.
2. Bring the ball and glove together, pause, and then begin the backswing of the pitching arm.
3. Once your backswing reaches its apex, the arm begins to move forward as your stride leg drives forward off of the rubber.
4. The pitching arm completes the full windmill circle while staying relaxed and consistent.
5. 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.
 - Stay tall and upright with your shoulders back and level - no dipping or leaning toward the throwing arm side.
6. Allow the arm to stay loose at the joint during the follow through and let the arm finish in a natural way.

Coaching Tips

Higher or Lower

When it comes to locating a pitch high or low, the advice for pitchers is often to release the ball sooner or later. However this isn't really practical – the pitcher doesn't know exactly when the ball was released to begin with, and releasing a millisecond sooner or later with any consistency is near impossible.

Instead, tell your pitcher to use the **Dart Method**.

In darts, the thrower will begin by looking and throwing at the bull's eye. If she keeps throwing and keeps hitting two inches high, then she should adjust and start looking and aiming at a target two inches below the bull's eye.

1. Similarly, a pitcher should start off with a focus point, something about the size of a quarter – maybe in the catcher's glove, maybe on her equipment, on the plate or even in the dirt. It doesn't matter, as long as the pitcher uses the same point.
2. If after throwing more than 10 pitches consistently too high or too low, have her adjust her focus point accordingly and that should fix the problem.

Left or Right

While it is possible for a pitcher to steer the ball with the pitching arm and hand, this method makes it extremely difficult to execute the more advanced pitches because most of them require specific locations for the hand and wrist to get the correct spin as quickly as possible.

This will result in less accurate pitches, but also will affect the break on advanced pitches, making them much less effective.

Instead, simply have the pitcher adjust the placement of her foot in relation to the power line. The pitching mechanics stay consistent and allow her to throw inside or outside on the plate just by moving her foot accordingly.

Changeup

The changeup is typically the second pitch we teach a young pitcher as it is the primary off-speed pitch.

- The **goal of the changeup** is to maintain the arm speed of a fastball while delivering a pitch that comes in about 10 to 15 mph slower. This will confuse the batter into swinging too early.

The key to hitting effectively is timing, and that's what makes the change up so effective – it disrupts the hitter's timing.

Grip

When throwing a changeup, the pitcher must reduce the transfer of speed onto the ball at the wrist snap and follow through. This can be accomplished using one of the following four grips:



Changeup - Knuckle Grip



Changeup - Circle Grip



Fastball - C-Grip



Fastball - Horseshoe Grip

With all four of these grips, the deeper the ball is in the hand and the more skin on the ball, the more it will slow the ball down while still looking like a fastball.

It doesn't really matter which grip your pitcher decides to go with, as long as she feels confident throwing. It's often a matter of experimentation and practice - whichever grip the pitcher feels most comfortable with is going to be most effective.

Delivery

The two most effective ways of reducing the power transfer in the wrist snap are the **Flip Changeup** and the **Push Changeup**.

Starting from the "X" position, we want the pitcher to come down into the final part of the motion much like they were throwing a fastball.

Flip Method

For this technique, we suggest using either their "C" grip or the circle grip.

1. The idea is for the pitcher to turn her hand during the final downward swing of the arm, just before the release, so that the outside of the wrist is going toward the catcher.
2. With the "C" Grip: Turn your hand all the way over, leading with the top of your hand and flipping the ball towards home plate.
3. With the Circle Change Grip: Rotate your hand slightly, so that the circle made by the index finger and thumb points directly at the catcher at the release point.



Flip Changeup Delivery

Push Method

For this technique, we recommend using either the Horseshoe grip or Knuckle grip.

1. The push method requires you to keep the wrist stiff as you comes through the final part of the pitch.
2. As you approach the release point, pop the grip open and "push" the ball through to home plate with the heel of your hand.
 - You can also achieve this by bending at the elbow instead of stiffening the wrist, shortening the arc of the pitching arm.



Push Changeup Delivery

It's important for pitchers to experiment with different grips and delivery methods to see which method you feel most comfortable with.

- Make sure to maintain your arm speed all the way through the windmill motion, regardless of the grip used.
- While a good pitcher may be able to get away with throwing the changeup by slowing her arm down when she has a large skill advantage over the batter, an experienced batter will have no problem reading the arm speed, waiting on the pitch, and cranking away.

Coaching Tips

- The key to making the changeup effective is disguising it. It is important to help your pitcher give the illusion of a fastball until the last possible second. Try taping her and letting her watch her pitches.
- When working on the changeup it's also important to make sure it keeps a flat trajectory and appears more like a fastball to the batter. Make sure there is no "hump" or arc in the middle of the pitch. Again, watching herself on tape can help a pitcher make mechanical corrections.

Breaking Pitches

Once the fastball and changeup have been developed, pitchers can begin to practice their movement pitches. These can be a little bit tougher to master!

In addition to the skill necessary to deliver a solid fastball, the pitcher must also execute four additional elements, known as **CPRS**.

Those four foundations of a good breaking pitch are:

Correct spin

Posture and weigh shift

Release point

Speed of spin

If your pitcher is consistently struggling with a breaking pitch, start by isolating and analyzing each of these elements individually. Once you identify the problem, you can spend more time focusing on that specific element during practice time.

Drop Ball

The first of the breaking pitches we're going to look at is the drop ball. There are two methods to throwing this pitch; the first is known as the **Peel (or Pull Up) Drop**, and the second is known as the **Turnover (or Rollover) Drop**.

This pitch is popular because the steep downward drop often forces a hitter to swing over top of the pitch. This often results in

- a) a swing and a miss; or
- b) a weak ground ball that a competent infield will take care of easily

Peel Drop Ball

The peel drop is typically the first type of drop ball taught to young pitchers.

Although it often doesn't break downward as drastically as the "turnover" drop, it has some definite advantages, especially for newer pitchers.

Generally speaking, it is faster for novice pitchers to learn, and (with practice) can be thrown at a speed similar to the fastball.

And - even when thrown incorrectly - it has less chance of causing arm strain or injury.



Peel Drop Ball Grip

Grip

The peel drop is thrown using a 4-seam fastball grip, with the pads of the fingers on the stitches on the side of the "U" (or horseshoe).

Delivery

Posture and weight shift (part 2 of **CPRS**) are often overlooked when developing breaking pitches. Incorrect posture and weight shift will render a drop ball ineffective.

- Start off with a shorter stride, roughly 6-12 inches shorter than the stride taken for a fastball
- Lean slightly forward, but do not bend at the waist.
- Shift weight onto the front toe. This forward positioning is what will help the ball move in a downward path.

To create the initial downward angle on the release the pitch needs to be released at a higher point than normal.

1. The pitcher will maintain her fastball mechanics up until the "X" position.
2. During the final portion of the motion, the pitcher will bend slightly at the elbow, keeping it tight against her side as she releases.
3. Just as you release the ball, quickly pull backward and slightly up with your fingertips, "peeling" the ball off your pitch hand and giving it a fast forward spin.

Turnover Drop Ball

The **Turnover (or Rollover) Drop** can be more difficult to master, but has the advantage of retaining a steep break downward, even when thrown at high speeds.

This grip is typically taught to older pitchers, who have the coordination and skill to achieve the rapid "snap" of the wrist over top of the ball at the exact moment it is being released.

Grip

The grip for the turnover requires two fingers placed lengthwise on the seams ("on the narrows").

- You can choose between the index and middle fingers on the short seams or the index and ring finger on the long seams.



Drop Ball - Turnover Grip

Delivery

1. Use a shorter stride, roughly 6-12 inches less than a full speed fastball
2. During the arm circle, your arm speed should be 10% slower than a typical fastball. This will allow the pitcher to concentrate on making the turnover action at the precise moment the ball is released
3. Complete the stride, with the weight forward and stride leg as straight as possible (without locking out the knee)
4. As you get closer to the release point, keep the wrist bent and hand back, pointing away from the body
5. At the exact moment the ball is released, quickly snap the wrist over the top of the ball. This will result in a low follow through with her pinky finger pointing up and her thumb pointing down.



Turnover Drop Ball Delivery

Coaching Tips

The drop ball is great when you need a ground ball or to keep the ball in the infield, but it can be tough to command and not every pitch is going to be perfect.

- It is vital that the backward snap occurs right at the release point so have you pitcher practice that motion at a slower speed. Once she has mastered the timing, have her throw increasingly faster pitches.

- If the pitch is getting thrown into the dirt, it is usually because the pitcher is staying flat and isn't getting over top of the pitch with her weight, resulting in the ball taking a hard line straight from the pitcher's hip into the dirt.
- Make sure your pitcher has a short stride, getting the palm of the hand into the hip, staying tight and getting her weight up and over the front leg.
- While we want her weight over the front leg and a slight lean forward early in the pitch, it is important that she stand tall and not lean forward at the snap.

Another important thing to keep in mind when throwing breaking pitches is that no pitch can be thrown "against the break."

For a pitch to break effectively, the initial release must be at the very least slightly in the direction of the desired break, meaning that a drop ball cannot be released upward and a rise ball cannot be released downward.

Rise Ball

The rise ball might be one of the toughest pitches to master, as getting the correct straight backspin can be very difficult.

Anything from an inability to maintain hip and shoulder positioning, a crossover follow through or even a twisting wrist snap can cause the straight backspin to barrel over into a torpedo spin.

However, after taking one glimpse at a rise ball pitcher's strikeout totals, your pitchers will be very keen to add it to their repertoire.

Grip

There are two popular grips for the rise ball, which are mostly identical, except for one small difference.

The first variation has the index finger rolled onto the side of the ball, similar to the circle change up grip, except the thumb stays underneath the ball on the seam. When throwing with this grip, the pitcher will feel a slight pinching of the index finger toward the middle finger at the wrist snap.

The second variation is the same, except instead of curled onto the side of the ball, the index finger is tucked back towards the hand. With this grip, the pitcher will put pressure on the ball with the tip of her index finger, pushing out and upward at the release.



Riseball Grip - Finger Rolled



Riseball Grip - Finger Tucked

The key to both grips, and what creates the back spin necessary for a rise ball, is that they help to *push the ball up off the heel of the hand as opposed to down off the fingertips.*

Regardless of the method, placing either just the middle finger, or both middle and ring fingers on a seam can do wonders for improving both the grip and snap at release.

This is another pitch that can be thrown with either a two seam or four seam rotation, and once you've managed to get the hang of the spin, it's very important to experiment with both and find out which of the two you feel most comfortable and in control with.

Delivery

Starting once again from the "X" position, we want the pitcher to come down into the final part of the motion much like they were throwing a fastball.

1. The pitcher's weight should be back, slightly behind the front leg.
2. The rise ball requires a longer stride.
 - By bringing the posture and weight shift backward, this allows the pitcher to attain that initial upward release angle necessary for an effective rise ball.
 - This is where having a strong lower body can really benefit the pitcher; this will allow her to execute a longer stride and therefore begin the pitch lower in the zone than others.

- As the pitcher comes down from the “X,” after a long stride, she will rotate her hips open, snapping at the back hip and bending at the elbow as she comes through, getting a good lift on the ball.



Rise Ball Delivery

- This needs to be a solid, quick snap, getting plenty of backspin on the ball at the release, twisting the door knob and finishing the pitch off by scooping up tight towards the body with her thumb pointed upward.

- Once the pitcher has released the ball, she should fall back onto her drive leg, positioned just behind the stride leg.

Coaching Tips

The rise ball can be one of the toughest softball pitches to master, as the power in the forearm required to generate a good back spin at the release makes it very difficult to throw at a high level. This is because unlike all other breaking pitches, the rise ball's break is against gravity.

- Ideally the rise ball will have a nice sharp break, right as the ball reaches the plate. Throwing it high and flat will result in a break too early— your pitcher should throw it low, so the batter sees a low pitch initially with the ball breaking up into the strike zone right at the plate.
- If the pitch is sailing up too high, have your pitcher re-examine her release point, as it's likely that she's letting the pitch get too far past her hip. Even if she has mastered the low rise ball, it's a good idea for her to play with the release point a little bit, as the rise ball is at its most effective when a pitcher is able to throw it at different heights.
- When throwing it low, we want the back leg to come down a little more and the snap started a little bit sooner, with the opposite being required if we want the pitch higher in the zone.

The rise ball is a complex pitch, with a very difficult spin – your pitcher is going to throw bad pitches when first learning. It is important that she focus on getting that quick wrist snap and imparting a fast spin on the ball. She must take the time to keep practicing and continuing to make the necessary corrections until she gets it down.

Curve Ball

The curveball is an effective pitch in forcing the batter to swing and miss on a strike or getting the batter to come out of the strike zone as a chase pitch.

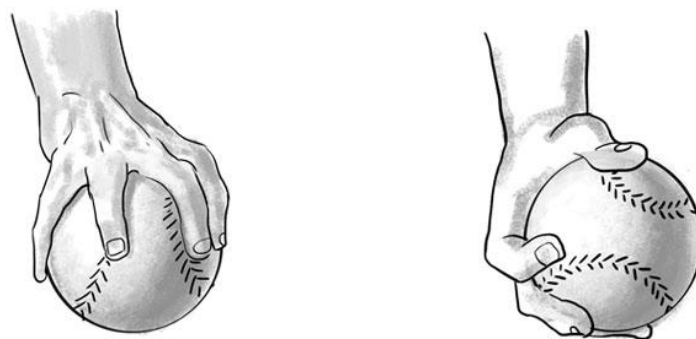
Note: The following two pitches involve horizontal spin and will therefore be executed differently by right handed and left handed pitchers. The pitches will be explained with the assumption that the learner is a right hander. Invert the instructions for left handed pitchers.

For example: a right hander throwing the curve ball will put a flat right to left spin on the ball, causing a right to left break. A left hander will do the opposite, throwing the pitch with a left to right spin, for a left to right break.

Grip

For most pitchers, the grip for their curveball is going to be very similar (or even identical) to the grip on their rise ball.

Generally the pitcher is free to experiment with ball location as well as finger placement, with the main guidelines being:



Curveball Grip

- The thumb as well as one of either the middle or ring fingers should be placed on the seams.

- The index finger should be curled or dug in on the inside of the ball to some degree.

After obtaining the correct spin, make sure your pitchers try out both two and four seam rotation as well, allowing her to figure out which of the two gives her optimal movement.

Delivery

1. The pitcher should have her weight shifted mostly onto the stride foot, with her posture and her head tilted slightly to the glove side of her body.
2. As you come down from the “X” position, tuck the elbow, snapping tightly off the right hip as you begin pulling the left shoulder.
3. The left shoulder is closed through the beginning of the pitch, opening up as you snap through and initiating the rotation of the body, pulling the pitching hand off the right hip and across the body, finishing at the left hip.



Curve Ball Delivery

4. The pitcher should feel as though her hips and shoulders are initiating the release, as opposed to the opposite, with the release being the catalyst for the rest of the body.
 - Stepping slightly to the right of the power line can help allow the pitcher to get a nice twist in as she releases the pitch.
5. It's important that the pitcher is releasing the ball at from right to left.
 - The wider right the crossover step, the wider the pitch will start, allowing the pitcher to throw the curve off the plate before breaking back over, or throw it on the plate before it breaks off completely.

Coaching Tips

- One of the most common problems for pitchers learning the curve is that they can't keep from throwing it outside. If that's the case, watch the stride as well as the lead shoulder and make sure she isn't opening the upper body too quickly.

- It's important that your pitcher keep it low and generally outside. Unlike the rise or drop pitches, the curve stays on relatively the same plane. This means we want pitches that finish either beyond the reach of the bat or even inside off the handle, staying away from the barrel of the bat.
- It's important that you stress good ball rotation, as it's the speed of that spin that will determine just how much and how severely the pitch will break. While the speed of the ball will have an impact on the break, it's the speed of the spin of the ball that will truly control the severity of the movement.

Screw Ball

When learning all other movement pitches, there is a pretty simple concept to keep in mind – release the ball with a spin towards the desired movement direction, and the ball will break in that direction.

However when it comes to the screwball, we are trying to produce a spin back in toward the pitching arm. We run into a problem as this is basically impossible from an underhand motion. So instead, we use two slightly different spins to achieve the same effect.

Grip

The first is a **Torpedo Spin**, with either the index and middle fingers, or ring and middle fingers, placed lengthwise along the seams as your two grip options. The thumb is placed on the seam underneath the ball, and if you go with the latter of the two options, make sure to tuck or roll the index finger.

- The result on release is a kind of a vertical screw, much like what happens when a pitcher makes a mistake with the rise ball, resulting in consistent movement in towards the pitching arm, but not a hard cutting action.

Our second option is achieved with a **Top Spin** instead of a back spin, and the amount of inward movement here is much more dependent on the type of ball being used. The pitcher will use a horseshoe grip, with a tighter grip with both the index and middle fingers.

- We want the pitcher to really emphasize the release off of these two fingers, and from there, the makeup of the ball and the long seams rotating through the air will cause the ball to steer back in toward the pitching arm.



Screwball - Torpedo Grip



Screwball - Horseshoe Grip

Delivery

1. The head and posture should be slightly over to the throwing arm's side of the pitcher's body, with the weight shifted forward, up onto the stride foot.
 - It's also important that she move the stride slightly away from the direction of the pitch's break, increasing the plate coverage and allowing for a better angle at release.
2. Coming down from the "X" position on this pitch, we want the pitcher to keep the elbow and bicep really tight as she goes into her snap.
 - It's important to remember that a pitch must be released slightly in the direction of desired spin, and this becomes even more important on a pitch like the screwball where the spin is not completely true to the direction of desired movement.
3. When using the torpedo grip option, come in as if throwing a rise ball but instead of coming up and forward at release, the pitcher should be crossing underneath the ball, moving right to left.
4. With the horseshoe grip, the same concept applies – release slightly in a right to left movement.



Screw Ball Delivery

Coaching Tips

- The screwball is a great situational pitch. While you don't want your pitchers to build their whole repertoire around a dominant screwball, it can be a great change of pace.
- It can be thrown to jam the batter or even to sneak the ball past a contact swinger who consistently fouls on everything anywhere near the zone.
- While it can move upwards a little bit when thrown with a backspin, we ideally want to focus on sideways movement so that we can keep this pitch down in on the knees.
- To prevent too much upwards movement, make sure the pitcher isn't falling back after the release of the pitch, and that she is really cutting underneath the bottom of the ball at release.

Combination Pitches

The **Rise Curve**, **Drop Curve**, and **Sliding Screwball** are the last three pitches we will cover. These are the last three you should be teaching your pitchers.

These pitches combine the breaks of two movement pitches into one pitch. Your pitcher must understand how both separate pitches work before she can begin to learn combination pitches.

Rise Curve

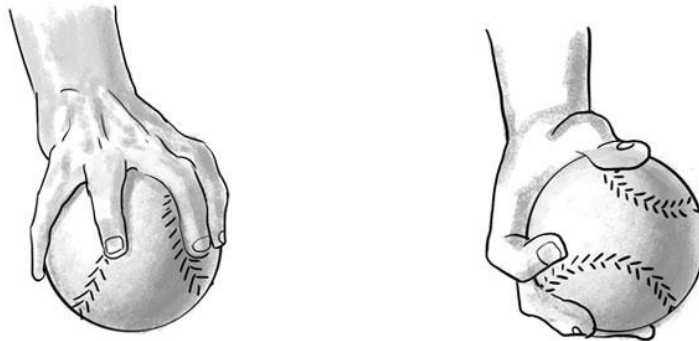
This is a great pitch to learn and it can be especially effective as a chase pitch for a hard hitting right handed hitter.

Grip

For the rise curve, our pitcher is going to use the same grip that they use for the curve ball.

Generally the pitcher is free to experiment with ball location as well as finger placement, with the main guidelines being:

- The thumb as well as one of either the middle or ring fingers should be placed on seams.
- The index finger should be curled or dug in on the inside of the ball to some degree.



Rise Curve Grip

After obtaining the correct spin, make sure your pitchers try out both two and four seam rotation as well, allowing her to figure out which of the two gives her optimal movement.

Delivery

With the rise curve, we want the pitcher to go from the right hip up to the left shoulder. Instead of the horizontal release (right hip to left hip) she uses with a regular curve.

1. The pitcher should have her weight shifted mostly onto the stride foot, with her posture and her head tilted slightly to the glove side of her body.
 - It's especially important that the pitcher keep her weight going left.
2. As she comes down from the "X" position, we want her to tuck the elbow, snapping tightly off the right hip as she begins pulling the left shoulder.
3. The left shoulder is closed through the beginning of the pitch, opening up as she snaps through and initiating the rotation of the body, pulling the pitching hand off the right hip and up and across the body, finishing at the left shoulder.
 - Bring the hip through and avoid the tendency to let her weight fall back to the right after the release.



Rise Curve Delivery

Coaching Tips

- Sometimes when this pitch is thrown the pitcher will get mostly the curve movement but not much rise – this is okay, it's not a bad miss, but for this pitch to be its most effective we really want it moving on both planes at the same time.
- The faster the backspin of the ball, the greater the probability of making it rise.
- The movement from the hitters left hip up to the right shoulder – that 45 degree break away out and away from the hitter – is especially tough to deal with after they've seen the regular curve ball a couple times.

Drop Curve

The drop curve can be a difficult ball to master, but has the advantage of retaining a steep break downward, even when thrown at high speeds.

Grip

The drop curve ball will use the same grip as the turnover drop ball.

The grip for the drop curve grip requires:

- Two fingers lengthwise on the seams.
- The pitcher can choose between the index and middle fingers on the short seams or the index and ring finger on the long seams.
- The pitcher should emphasize getting “over top of the ball” and rotating all the way through into the pitching arm side thigh.



Drop Curve Grip

Delivery

1. The pitcher should have her weight shifted mostly onto the stride foot, with her posture and her head tilted slightly to the glove side of her body.
2. As the pitcher comes down from the “X” position, we want her to tuck the elbow behind the torso a little bit more and lean forward into the pitch.
3. She snaps down and either across the left leg or inside into the thigh.



Drop Curve Delivery

4. Finish the pitch by pulling and rotating the whole body through to the left.

Coaching Tips

- We want the ball to be moving across both vertical and horizontal planes at the same time.
- It is best for a pitcher to think curve first and drop second to get the desired movement.
- Emphasize the snap “down and across.”

The Sliding Screwball

Grip

The sliding screwball is gripped like a slightly skewed fastball. We want the pitcher to slide her fingers slightly to the left, with the fingers over the seams, and the thumb in the same location.



Sliding Screwball Grip

Delivery

1. The pitcher should come down out of the “X” like a fast ball.
2. She is going to snap tight and then push her whole body out to the right as she releases.
3. Her hand is going to come out to the right through the release.
4. The release is going to go out and up to the right shoulder.

5. The back hip should move out to the right, toward the right handed hitter's batter's box.



Sliding Screw Ball Delivery

Coaching Tips

- This is an especially effective pitch on fastball counts, trying to get up ahead or come back from behind, as it can be very tough for the batter to identify the pitch early, catching them off guard by the break.
- While we do want movement out to the right, make sure the pitcher isn't dropping her shoulder too far out to the right and taking the wind out of the pitch.

Final Thoughts

We have covered the proper mechanics for nine important pitches! Remember, this is a lot of information and it will take a pitcher many years to properly develop all of these pitches.

It is important to help your pitcher build her skills up like one would build a tower of blocks. She will begin with a strong base of the basic fundamentals.

The next level will be a strong and accurate fastball. Next will be the changeup. After she has mastered the changeup, begin developing her breaking pitches. And finally, at the top of the tower are the combination pitches.

Good coaching, proper mechanics and lots of practice will ensure your pitcher's success!

More Training and Resources

If you haven't had a chance yet, you can still upgrade your order to include the Essential Pitching Grips online video clinic by going here now:

www.softballspot.com/p/upgrade-grips

You'll get step by step video demonstrations for all the pitches explained in this report, plus dozens of useful coaching tips to accelerate your results!

If you'd like to see my complete collection of drills and online clinics, please visit:

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