

BULLDOG Baseball/Softball

“PLAYING CATCH”

Playing Catch is the most basic skill set for all levels of baseball/softball. The points below are critical point reminders.

<i>Catching Points</i>
• Athletic Position (ready receive position)– square on
• Two Hands – SOFT HANDS
• Ball above the waist – Thumb to Thumb – High 5
• Ball below the waist – Pinkie to Pinkie – Low 5
• Trap – NO PINCH
• CREEP steps – L/R/L ready or R/L/R ready

This is a critical aspect of the game. This should be a primary focus of everyday practice and every game.

The curriculum should be completed before your throwing segments of practice. Included below are developmental check points for each of the levels of play prior to starting High School. Our goal in working with you is that all athletes are properly prepared when they arrive for High School Competition. Build the best Bulldogs we can.

LEVEL STANDARDS:

8U player:

- ✓ Maintain proper athletic position – square on ball
- ✓ Receive the ball with two hands – above waist thumb –thumb (HIGH 5), below waist pinkie-pinkie (LOW 5), SOFT HANDS
- ✓ Understand how their glove works – TRAP – NO PINCH
- ✓ CREEP steps – Righty – L/R/L, Lefty – R/L/R

10U player:

- ✓ Maintain proper athletic position
- ✓ Receive the ball with two hands - SOFT HANDS
- ✓ Understand how their glove works in relation to their body position
- ✓ CREEP steps
- ✓ Bottom to top and Away from body (Square - FUNNEL TECHNIQUE)
- ✓ Palm to ball, thumb down or thumb away (back hand/fore hand)
- ✓ At Face – Glove in line w/ throwing side cheek for vision

12U/14U player:

- ✓ Maintain proper athletic position
- ✓ Receive the ball with two hands - SOFT HANDS
- ✓ Understand how their glove works in relation to their body position
- ✓ CREEP steps – INF/OF variations
- ✓ Bottom to top and Away from body (Square - FUNNEL TECHNIQUE)
- ✓ Palm to ball, thumb down or thumb away (back hand/forehand)
- ✓ At Face – Glove in line w/ throwing side cheek for vision
- ✓ Footwork – angle of attack on ball
- ✓ Drop Steps, crossovers

TERMS & VOCABULARY:

Athletic Position: Feet shoulder width apart, knees bent, butt down, hands out and ready in front with flex at the elbows and wrists. The athletic position should always be attempted to gain a square on the ball.

Two Hands (SOFT hands): Always using two hands within reason. For ground balls, fly balls, line drives etc. This allows fielder to set up quicker for throwing to make a play after receiving the ball. SOFT hands are hands that flex at the elbows and wrists, the force of the ball is absorbed by the wrists and arms this is the beginning of the funnel technique.

TRAP: Used to capture all balls hit. Two hands brought together using the glove and throwing hand. Often referred to as “Feeding the alligator (ground balls) or Feeding the lion (fly balls)”, players should use their throwing hand on-top of their glove hand. NOT IN A PINCHING MOTION!

Thumb- Thumb: Used for all balls thrown/hit above the waist the thumbs are toward each other with the fingers to the sky as often as possible. This sets up the receiver to get two hands on the ball as quickly as possible to transition to the throwing position.

Pinkie-Pinkie: Used for all balls thrown/hit below the waist the pinkies are toward each other with the fingers to the ground as often as possible. This sets up the receiver to get two hands on the ball as quickly as possible to transition to the throwing position.

Funnel Technique: The technique used with soft hands to bring the ball to the throwing shoulder in preparation for making a quicker transition to the throwing position from the fielding position.

Bottom to top and away from body: advanced move used to field balls from the bottom to the top of the body or away from the body funneling back to the throwing position. Sometimes this is referred to as “ground up” especially relating to ground balls, used in relation to squaring ball.

Palm to ball, thumb down or thumb away: advanced move used to field balls that are too far away from the body to square up on. Palm to ball meaning the “reach” to the ball. Sometimes this is referred to as backhand (thumb down) and forehand (thumb away). The idea being this is a last ditch attempt when squaring the ball is almost impossible.

Angle of Attack: the compound idea to receive the ball at the most productive angle to then turn around and throw the ball back on a play. The angle of attack takes a player to the point where the ball will be, allowing them to get behind the ball and set up. Players must use drop steps and crossovers to achieve.

Creep Steps: the three step momentum creator when a pitcher begins his motion home. All fielders except the catcher move in a set pattern to get their momentum going to be able to attack the ball. The steps are determined by hand dominance and position in the field slightly alters the steps. If RH – Left, right, left. If LH – left, right, left.

Drop Steps: the agility process one uses to get momentum going on balls hit over your head or at an angle behind you.

Cross-over: the agility process steps one uses to get momentum going on balls hit left or right of the athlete.

DRILLS:

Coach Controlled groups – Smallest groups relating to # of Coaches able to work. All drills can be used for all levels, however they should be qualified for the skill level. Do not be afraid to challenge the athletes, but be conscious that if they experience consistent failure the drill will be counter productive.

Stay at a standard distance, this is about playing catch NOT throwing. Coach should decide when balls will start to go left and right, short and long. BUT COACH CONTROLS ALL DRILLS.

- **Whiffle ball Toss** – Players line up across from each other at a standard distance, farther away as skill level increases. Emphasize TWO HANDS, Thumb – Thumb, Pinkie – Pinkie depending on location of throw. Coach commands the throw.
- **Safety ball/Tennis (older players Baseball) Toss** – Same as above, athlete's will be more nervous about playing with "real" balls without their gloves. The point is to help them learn to understand that it's more about their body, arms, and hands then what the glove does with catching the ball. SOFT HANDS!
- **Four spot Glove Work** – Players line up across from each other at a standard distance, farther away as skill level increases. Players will throw and catch in spots based on number called by coach. The throw is made based on the number call to the location on their partner, but the receiver should adjust the body to square ball as often as possible. 1 is always glove side high, 2 throw side low, 3. glove side low, 4. throw side high. The focus should be using the glove the correct way with fingers high and palm to ball ALWAYS using 2-hands. TRAP NO PINCH, CREEP to catch.

