How to Groom a Young Catcher

Coach Don / For Active.com

The catcher's position is the most demanding in baseball. Here's a step-by-step guide coaches can use when developing young catchers.

During the course of a game, the catcher is the busiest player on the field: crouching behind the plate, blocking balls, keeping track of the count on each batter, repositioning teammates defensively, and so on. So select a sturdy, smart, and strong youngster to be your catcher. A catcher's mitt is padded and rounded so that the ball easily lands in the pocket. The extra padding also helps ensure the safety of the player using the glove.

**Basic Catching Position**

The catcher assumes a comfortable crouching position about two feet behind the plate. The catcher uses his glove to give the pitcher a throwing target.

The catcher can move the target around the plate to give the pitcher an inside or outside target. Have catchers protect the throwing hand from foul-tipped balls by placing it behind the back of the leg.

With the legs shoulder-width apart, the catcher keeps the weight on the balls of the feet so he is ready to move in any direction for a poorly thrown ball.

Staying low helps the catcher avoid being hit by the swing of the batter and allows the umpire to see the baseball as it crosses the plate. When a ball is pitched in the dirt, the catcher should try to block the ball and keep it in front of the body.

**Throwing out Base Runners**

With runners on base, your catcher should be in the up position; feet shoulder-width apart and the right foot slightly in front of the left. The glove hand should be extended away from the body, providing a large target.

The back should remain parallel to the ground. This position will allow your catcher to receive the pitch and throw to a base quickly.

When a runner attempts a steal, the catcher should lean into the ball just before catching it, making sure not to come forward too soon, which could lead to an interference call if the batter swings and hits the catcher.

While catching the ball, the catcher should quickly move the glove-side leg forward into the throwing position, rotate the shoulders parallel to the batter's box, and bring the glove hand near the ear, where it should meet the throwing hand.

The catcher can make the throw by transferring weight from the back leg to the front leg, rotating the shoulder, and following through. The follow-through involves bringing the throwing hand to the opposite knee while stepping towards second base with the throwing-side leg.