



## Catcher Mechanics & Fundamentals

### There is no place like home!

Jack Parks, MGSL / Wreckers Player Development



#### Position Competencies

The catcher is one of the most physically and mentally demanding positions in all of sports. The position demands leadership, confidence, communication, athleticism, agility, intelligence, and both physical and mental toughness.

The catcher is the “quarterback” and field general of the team. Obviously, they are the only player facing the field of play. Therefore, they must be the “take-charge player” in directing infield play and calling cut-offs. The catcher is your on-field coach and the cornerstone of your defense.

<b>Squat Stance</b>	<b>Lower Body Setup</b>
Weight	Weight (center of gravity) is on the balls of the feet, NEVER on the heels.
Feet	Feet outside of knees and shoulders width or beyond, knees outside of hips. Balanced and athletic.
Toes	Toes pointed outward.  Squared Toe tips are parallel with bases empty, runner only on 3rd, or fully loaded. Squared stance provides optimum positioning for lateral blocking movement.  Angled For righthanded catchers, left toe ahead of right tow by a half of a foot when there are baserunners on 1st and or 2nd base. Angled stance provides optimum positioning for throwing out baserunners.
Legs Hunched	Squat stance is low, upper legs parallel to ground, rear end at knees or below.

<b>Squat Stance</b>	<b>Upper Body Setup</b>
Posture	Posture is straight and stacked. Chest up with the head over shoulders, shoulders over hips, and hips over legs/feet.
Glove arm/hand	Glove arm must be relaxed and bent, elbow below glove, glove open and fingers pointed to the sky.  Glove should be positioned at chest height, in the center of the body, and about 12-18 inches from the chest.
Throwing Hand	Throwing hand NEVER behind the glove and not recommend behind the back.  The throwing hand needs to be behind the leg to protect against foul tips. Optimum hand positioning is thumb in palm, fingers slightly closed in fist, hand placed on the side of the hunched calf (lower leg).



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	Thumb in palm because you do not want your thumb injured by getting caught on your leg guard when transitioning to a throw.
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Rules	
Catcher's Box	<p>Yes, catchers have a box... 10 feet in length from the rear outside corners of the batter's box and 8 feet, 5 inches wide.</p> <p>The catcher's box is area in which the catcher must remain from the time the pitcher steps on the pitcher's plate until the pitch is released. The catcher's body and equipment are considered within the box unless touching the ground outside the box.</p> <p>A catcher shall be inside the lines of the catcher's box and all other defensive players positioned in fair territory when the pitcher takes their position to pitch and when the pitch is released. PENALTY: An illegal pitch is called.</p> <p>The catcher shall return the ball directly to the pitcher after each pitch, except after a strikeout or a putout made by the catcher, or to play on a base runner. PENALTY: The batter is awarded a ball. EXCEPTION: Intentionally violating the rule in order to walk the batter without pitching shall not result in a ball being awarded to the batter.</p>
Catcher Interference	<p>Inexperienced catchers tend to reach out to the ball when giving a target and when catching the ball. <b>Do not reach for the ball.</b> If the catcher interferes with the batter's swing, the batter is awarded 1<sup>st</sup> base.</p> <p>Relax and bend the arm, bring the glove back in front of the chest.</p>
Drop 3 <sup>rd</sup> Strike	<p>The batter becomes a base runner when the catcher does not catch 3<sup>rd</sup> strike (ball hits the ground) AND</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) 1st base is NOT occupied with 0 or 1 out</li> <li>2) 2 outs</li> </ol>

Blocking	
Footwork	Use footwork to quickly position center of the body to block the ball. Jab step (short step) sideways to meet the ball. Ball to the left of the plate, jab step with the left foot to meet the ball. Ball to the right of the plate, jab step with the right foot to meet the ball.
Knees	It is important to drop to your knees moving towards the ball, not straight down.
Shoulders / Chest	ALWAYS squared and angled to home plate. Ball in the ground to the left of the plate, the catcher jab steps to the left and rotates their left shoulder towards 1 <sup>st</sup> base, keeping chest squared to the plate. Ball in the ground to the right of the plate, the catcher jab steps to the right



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	and rotates their right shoulder towards 3 <sup>rd</sup> base, keeping the chest squared to the plate.  Slightly angled forward deflecting the ball downward and towards the plate.
Glove Hand	Glove down to ground, open and fingers pointing down, between the thighs. NEVER use the glove to pick the ball off the ground.
Throwing Hand	Position hand behind glove. ALWAYS use throwing hand to pick the ball off the ground.
Head / Chin	Head and chin down to chest as the player drops to the ground
Helmet	When trying to locate the ball, remove and hold helmet in throwing hand until ball is located. When the ball is located, toss the helmet far away from the play (out of bounds).

<b>Framing</b>	
Glove Hand Movement	The glove hand thumb ALWAYS points to the center of home plate... with the fingers pointing forward, the wrist needs to rotate the fingers around the thumb.
Wrist	Keep wrist firm!
Stick the Pitch	After receiving the ball in the strike zone, using a firm wrist and proper glove positioning, the catcher should freeze their glove for at least a second. This allows the umpire to

<b>Popping</b>	<b>(Throwing out baserunners)</b>
"Pop Time"	Measured from time the pitch hits the glove... until the ball is caught by the middle infielder at 2 <sup>nd</sup> base. 2.0 seconds is the standard metric for advanced softball catchers (HS/college).
Drive and Twist	Popping is when the catcher transitions (pops up) from a squat position and elevates to a throwing position.  After receiving the ball, the player immediately elevates (disregard "sticking the pitch") by using their legs to drive upward, while twisting 90 degrees to where their glove elbow is pointing to their target.  The player uses their upper body and torso to twist into position while landing on the ground, rear foot first, plants front foot, then throws. Righthanded – Lands right foot first, then left, then throw. Reverse for lefthanded catchers.
Glove to Ear	The player needs to optimize their hand movements to minimize pop time. After receiving the ball in the glove, the glove (moving across the body) and throwing hand (moving up from calf) immediately move into position to exchange at the rear ear of the throwing side. This occurs simultaneously as the player drives and twists.



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Glove to Pit	After the Glove to Ear exchange, the glove elbow quickly aims towards target, then glove hand pulls back across the body and tucks into the armpit of the glove side.
Aim	The perfect throw is when the ball arrives at the bag, just above the ground. However, a 1 hop throw to 2 <sup>nd</sup> base is a very effective throw. A 1 hop throw is better than a throw into the outfield. HINT: The catcher should aim for the pitcher's head or just above. It sounds dangerous but the pitcher is trained to drop or step aside when the catcher is throwing to 2 <sup>nd</sup> base.
Footwork	<p>There is a catcher throwing rhythm where the player lands on their rear leg first (power leg), then plants their front leg (plant leg), and then throws. Thus, taking NO EXTRA steps when throwing to the base.</p> <p>T Drill When the front foot lands, it's pointing toward target at a 45-degree angle. Its important that the front foot lands on the 'power line'. Power line is an imaginary upside down "T" aligned in the center of the catcher's stance while in the squat position. Rear foot is perpendicular to the target on the base of the power line.</p>

<b>Positioning</b>	
Pop Foul	When the ball is popped up by the batter in fouls territory. <b>Due to the spin of the ball, the catcher turns their back towards the infield to field the ball.</b> When they locate the ball, the catcher removes their face masks and tosses the helmet far away from the play and makes the catch.
Play at the Plate	<p>The catcher can NOT block the plate when they do NOT have the ball (obstruction). The Catcher must give the baserunner access to ½ of the plate and ½ of the base path.</p> <p>When there is a play at the plate, the best position for the catcher is in front of the plate with their left foot stepping on the 3<sup>rd</sup> base line.</p> <p>As the catcher receives the ball, they turn to tag the baserunner (close to the ground) with the ball in their glove. Ideally both hands are on the ball with the throwing hand securing the ball inside of the glove. The glove protects the throwing hand from cleat injuries.</p> <p>The player may block 100% of the plate IF they have the ball before the baserunner arrives. It's best for the catcher to keep their helmet on for plays at the plate.</p>
Backing up 1 <sup>st</sup> Base	When there are no baserunners, the catcher should be hustling down the first base line to back up 1 <sup>st</sup> base on an overthrow.



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Communicating Hand Signals to Pitcher	While in the squat position, the catcher uses their thighs to conceal the pitching signal communicated to the pitcher. White fingernail polish is very helpful.
Plate Positioning	Catchers should avoid setting up and providing a target in the middle of the plate. Setup and glove positioning should be off-center. Do this and the pitcher will be your best friend.

<b>Recommended Videos</b>	
Pop Mechanics (Wil Nieves 12-year pro)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySu-6zuFEgo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySu-6zuFEgo</a>
Complete Catching Mechanics (compilation of several professional catchers) long video but comprehensive.	<a href="https://youtu.be/hxAIOA4VZYM">https://youtu.be/hxAIOA4VZYM</a>