

Coaching the Pitching Delivery

Patriot Athletic League

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Stages of the Delivery

The stages of the pitching delivery are the:

1. Stance
2. Leg Lift
3. Break
4. Power Position
5. Release Point
6. Follow Through

The direct correlation between **a sound, repeatable pitching motion** and success on the mound can't be overstated.

As difficult as pitching can be, there are many variables around the game that can make it much harder.

As a coach, you should teach your pitcher what they can and what they can't control. This starts with their delivery.



Stretch Stance

The stretch stance is used more commonly today than ever before when there are no runners on base.

It is also used as the primary stance with runners on base.

Because it's simple, this stance is frequently used to introduce pitching to younger players.

- For this stance, the pitcher will start with their glove-side shoulder pointed toward home plate, and the outside of their throwing-side foot flush with the front side of the rubber.
- Their glove and throwing hand should be in a relaxed position in front of their chest, and **their feet should be shoulder-width apart.**
- From this position, the pitcher can shift their weight back onto their throwing-side foot to get to the leg lift or balance position.

Windup Stance



With no runners on base, for example, the windup can be used.

- For this stance, teach your pitcher to begin on the **rubber facing home plate**, in an athletic position with their glove and throwing hand together in front of their chest.
- The pitcher should **be upright and relaxed**.
- From this position, the pitcher should take a **rocker step** with their glove-side foot. Make sure your pitcher **maintains balance** during this step.
- The pitcher will then **pivot their throwing-side foot so that it is flush** against the front side of the rubber.
- Once in this position, the pitcher can then pull their **glove-side knee up to get to the leg lift or balance position**

Leg Lift

No matter which stance is used to start the delivery, the pitcher will always gain their balance and collect their power using a leg lift.

- The pitcher should bring their glove-side knee up so that their **thigh is at least parallel to the ground** and slightly towards their back shoulder.
- While maintaining balance and body control, their lower body should be loaded and ready to move forward to deliver the pitch.



Break of the Hands

The pitcher **begins their movement toward the plate with the break phase.**

This is when the ball and glove separate, and the throwing motion begins.

The pitcher should be focused on the catcher's mitt.

- There are all different types of athletes, and every pitcher will be different. **The main goal is to get the arm up on time**
- **As the leg starts coming down, the hands should break apart**
- As the foot lands the pitcher should be in a good power position



Power Position



The glove-side foot has now hit the ground, leaving the pitcher in the **power position**.

Here, the **legs are in a wide base**, both **arms are raised and prepared to begin the transition forward**.

This **transition** should **begin** as soon as the **glove-side foot hits the ground**.

- The pitcher should have a shoulder tilt with the glove arm shoulder slightly higher than the throwing arm shoulder.
- The arm and ball should be up in a position to begin transitioning.
- The front side should remain strong.
- The stride should have direction and alignment toward the plate.
- The stride foot should be on the ground and the back foot should still be engaged on the rubber.

Release Point



The release point is where the pitcher's entire delivery comes together.

- Now, your pitcher's **upper body and momentum** should have shifted out **over their glove-side leg**.
- The **throwing-side arm** should now **accelerate** toward the catcher, and the pitcher should feel as though they are staying behind the ball as long as possible.
- The ball should be released out front with as much extension as possible on a downward trajectory toward the target.
- After the release point, a natural pronation should occur.

Follow Through

The follow through should enable the pitcher to have a natural deceleration of his throwing arm.

- An abrupt stoppage of the arm or an off-balance finish is a recipe for an injury.
- Make sure your pitcher finishes his motion with a flat back and allows his throwing arm to finish past his glove-side knee.
- Pitchers should stay as strong as they can on that plant leg.
- A good follow through will land the pitcher in a good position to become an active fielder.
 - Fielding his position is one of the best ways a pitcher can help his own cause, and the proper follow through is the first step to achieving that success



Resources

Drills

- Balance Drill
- Break of the Hands Drill
- Arm Speed
- Power Position
- Heavy Front Side Drill
- Daily Flat Ground Work
- One Knee Drill
- Interval Throwing

Playing Catch.

- Playing Catch is a good way to reinforce your pitchers' mechanics without putting too much pressure on the arm
- Repeat the delivery as much as possible to create muscle memory
- Have intent behind every throw
- Use the legs, keep the same stride as if throwing off the mound.

Pitcher Pre-Game Routine

BE WELL RESTED

- It takes a lot of energy to pitch
- It's imperative that the day before a start includes proper hydration practices and 8-10 hours of sleep.
- Making sure your arm and body receive proper rest in between outings is essential to your success and to helping ensure a healthy career.

HAVE A TIMED ROUTINE

- This routine should be defined and should work backwards off of the planned time of the first pitch.
 - When do I start? How much do I throw to get loose.
 - When, how much and where do I warm up pitch (rehearsal really) with the catcher and a coach prior to game.
 - Coach Supervision is important to identify and correct mechanics or detect injury or dead arms

GET YOUR BODY WARMED UP

- Calisthenic / stretching / throwing to get loose

PLAY CATCH BEFORE TAKING THE MOUND

- On game day, a common mistake made by young pitchers is an anxiousness to jump right on the mound without playing proper catch.
- More than any other day, it's imperative that a full throwing program be employed prior to a start.
- An interval throwing program that stretches out further than the mound distance should be used.
- It's also acceptable to work on the flat ground prior to moving to the bullpen, emphasizing any mechanical points before getting ready for the game.
- The mound work done prior to a start is as much about getting the mechanics and pitch variety down for the day as it is about actually warming up.

HAVE A PLAN IN THE BULLPEN

- Have a plan and not just make it up as we go along. It's important that the pitcher prepares for the variety of situations he may find himself in during the game, without overdoing it in the bullpen.
- A simple pre-game plan should include
 - throwing out of the wind up and the stretch, as both situations will likely arise during the game.
 - Mixing locations is another important element to pre-game, with pitchers working arm side as well as the cross-corner of the plate.
 - Be sure to begin working off an established fastball and then begin mixing in other pitches -- including secondary pitches with mixed location.
 - Finally, a pitcher may opt to actually work a simulated hitter or two prior to leaving the bullpen.

Pre-Pitch Process

PRE-PITCH ROUTINE-

BEFORE EVERY PITCH prior to starting your delivery:

1. clear the result of the last pitch and focus back in on making the next one.
2. Once the next pitch is selected the pitcher should visualize themselves executing that pitch
3. Work at a good pace that keeps the fielders focused and ready

KNOW THE GAME SITUATION

- WHERE ARE THE RUNNERS? HOW MANY OUTS? WHAT IS THE SCORE? WHERE DO I GO WITH THE BALL IF IT IS HIT TO ME?

KNOW YOUR HITTER

- Knowing a hitter's tendencies. As the game progresses, many hitters will show certain patterns.
 - For example, is he a pull-hitter? Does he only go the opposite way? Does he always take the first pitch?
- **Figuring out the hitters tendencies helps a pitcher determine pitch type and location.** For more advanced pitchers, it also enables better development of a planned pitch sequence.

PITCH TO CONTACT (THROW STRIKES, MAKE THEM SWING THE BAT TO BEAT YOU)

- One of the easiest ways to create trouble for your own team is for the pitcher to attempt to pitch away from contact.
- The reality is that most balls that are put into play result in outs, especially if you can pitch to a hitter's weakness.
- Attack the bottom half of the strike zone and more often than not, good things will happen.

WORK AHEAD IN THE COUNT

- The further behind a pitcher gets during an at-bat, the more limited his pitch selection tends to be.
- As the ball-to-strike ration goes up, so too does a hitter's batting averages, walk percentages and virtually every other measurable offensive category with them

Fastball

- Pitcher's most important weapon.
- provides the foundation for everything else he does on the mound.
- It doesn't matter if a pitcher's fastball maxes out in the low-80s or hits triple digits - the ability to throw it for strikes is the key to success.
- Young hurlers must first master the grips of the four-seam and two-seam fastballs - in that order - before trying more advanced pitches.

Four-Seam Fastball

- Held across the "horseshoe," or the two widest seams of the ball.
- On a four-seam grip
 - your fingertips should contact with the seams, and
 - your thumb should be under the ball acting as the anchor
 - fingers should be a comfortable distance apart but not too far
 - the farther they're spread, the less velocity on the throw. Younger players with small hands might be more comfortable initially gripping the ball with three fingers - index, middle and ring - until their hands are big enough to master the grip with just their index and middle fingers.
- The four-seam fastball consists of a gentle grip and an easy release. Don't choke the ball.
- The throw will stay straight, which is why **infielders use** a four-seam grip to throw.
- this pitch is often used to work the cross-corner of the plate

TWO-SEAM FASTBALL

- two-seam fastball is held with the seams.
- have your fingertips rest on the stitches
 - Holding the stitches enables you to pull on the ball, creating friction and backspin.
- **spin equals movement.**
 - Grip the ball with the seams either on top or with your fingers across the narrowest seams.
 - Pressure on your index and middle finger at the release point will produce added movement.
 - Because of the finger pressure, velocity decreases.
- The key is to maintain consistent arm action and arm speed so as not to tip the pitch.
- As a pitcher progresses with this pitch, they may develop sink or arm-side run.
- Often this pitch will be used to work the arm side of the plate.