

TEACHING FIELDING SKILLS - CATCHER -



The catcher is your team's "field general". Since the catcher directs all defensive play, he should be the leader and willing to be vocal. Catchers must know the situation, read the batter, and call pitches accordingly. The following guidelines will help you develop better catchers:

CATCHERS

1. Catchers should always be aware of their position behind the plate. When squatting, their feet should be shoulder-width or a little more apart and their weight should be on the balls of their feet.

2. To conceal signals from opponents and the first and third base coaches, the catcher should give signs close to his body. Hanging their glove hand below the glove-side knee will also help conceal the signals.

3. Catchers should always give the pitcher a large stationary target with their mitts.

4. When blocking balls in front of the plate, a catcher's first priority is to stop the ball. To do this, the catcher should drop to both knees, place his glove between his legs, and keep his head down and body in front of the ball.

5. On foul balls that are popped up behind the plate, catchers should first visually locate the ball. Next, he should take off his mask and hold it until he gets under the ball. After he is "camped" under the ball, he should toss the mask out of the way and catch the ball with two hands.

6. On grounders hit to the infield with no one on base, it is the catcher's job to back up first base. Running, he should take an angle towards first base that will put him about 15 feet behind the base. This will give him enough room to field any poor throws.

DRILLS

The following drills are designed to develop skills which a catcher will perform during the course of a game:

1. BLOCKING DRILL

The Blocking Drill is designed to teach catchers how to block balls in the dirt. The catcher, in full gear with mask on, takes position behind the plate. A coach standing about 20-30 feet away throws tennis balls or wiffle balls in the dirt. This forces the catcher to work on keeping the ball in front of the plate. Mix it up by throwing balls in the dirt to the right, left, and directly in front of the catcher. Make catchable throws now and then to prevent the catcher from anticipating balls in the dirt.

2. POP-UP DRILL

The Pop-Up Drill is designed to teach catchers how to catch pop-ups behind the plate. The catcher, in mask and full gear, takes position behind the plate. A coach stands a few feet in front of the catcher with a bucket of balls. The coach then throws balls high over the catcher's head. The catcher should work on finding the ball, getting under the ball, tossing the mask out of the way and catching the ball with two hands. Mix it up by throwing balls over to the right, left, and directly over the catcher's head.

