



Catching

Catching is the act of receiving the thrown, hit or pitched ball in the air. (firmly held in the athletes' hands or glove)

The skill of catching a thrown ball is often difficult for our athletes, as it requires good hand-eye coordination. Sometimes our athletes are afraid of the ball. They may even close their eyes and turn away from the ball.

When teaching athletes how to catch a thrown ball, focus on the following:

Ready Position:

- Feet shoulder-width apart with knees slightly bent,
- Weight on balls of feet
- Shoulders, hips, and knees are square to the target
- Hands start in “neutral” position ~ approximately waist high, thumbs up, palms facing each other
- Receive ball with hands in front of the body, palms facing the ball
- Catch the ball in the middle of the body
- When the ball is coming in above the waist, catch the ball with fingers towards the sky “high to the sky”
- When the ball is coming in below the waist, catch the ball with fingers towards the ground: “down to the ground”





Below The Waist Position

Skill Progression – Correct positioning for catching the ball below the waist

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Stand, with your feet shoulder width apart, in a relaxed position	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hold hands in front of body with arms slightly extended at waist height	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Place little fingers side by side, palms up, thumbs out, and fingers pointing down	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cup the palms slightly to form a pocket for catching a ball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Repeat sequence until athlete correctly positions his/her hands in this manner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points – Correct positioning for catching the ball below the waist

1. Demonstrate the proper position of hands.
2. Point out the similarity between the below-the-waist catch position in softball and trying to hold water in one's hands.
3. This is the 'Below the waist' catching position.
4. If your athletes are struggling to play catch with each other, there are many progressive steps you can use to lead up to catching a regular softball.
 - a) Use rag balls, rubber balls, or whiffle balls to decrease hardness of a regulation softball.
 - b) Use larger balls such as playground balls, soccer balls, or beach balls. This also helps to encourage the use of two hands.
 - c) Deflate balls slightly to soften impact. This helps diffuse fearful tendencies and decrease chance of hurting fingers.
 - d) Use bean bags to encourage "flexible fingers"
 - e) Start closer together and slowly increase distance between
 - f) If still having difficulty, use balloons to alleviate fear and emphasize "tracking the balloon with your eyes"





Above The Waist Position

Skill Progression – Correct positioning for catching the ball above the waist

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Stand, with your feet shoulder width apart, in a relaxed position	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hold hands in front of body, with arms slightly extended at chin height	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Be able to peer over the top of the hands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Place thumbs side by side, palms facing forward, fingers pointing up	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flex wrists back slightly to make palms face slightly skyward	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cup hands form a pocket for catching a ball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Repeat sequence until athlete correctly positions his/her hands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points – Correct positioning for catching the ball above the waist

1. Demonstrate the proper position of hands.
2. Have the athlete switch catching position from the below the waist position to the above the waist position and so forth. NOTE: This is used to combine the two catching ready positions.
3. This is the ‘Above the waist’ catching position.
4. If your athletes are struggling to play catch with each other, there are many progressive steps you can use to lead up to catching a regular softball.
 - ♦ Use rag balls, rubber balls, tennis balls, or whiffle balls to decrease hardness of a regulation softball.
 - ♦ Use larger balls such as playground balls, soccer balls, or beach balls. This also helps to encourage the use of two hands.
 - ♦ Deflate balls slightly to soften impact. This helps diffuse fearful tendencies and decrease chance of hurting fingers.
 - ♦ Use bean bags to encourage “flexible fingers”
 - ♦ Start closer together and slowly increase distance between
 - ♦ If still having difficulty, use balloons to alleviate fear and emphasize “tracking the balloon with your eyes”





Catch a ball below the waist

Skill Progression – Catch a thrown ball below the waist

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Stand, with your feet shoulder width apart, in a relaxed position facing thrower, while wearing a softball glove	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assume correct “below-the-waist” catch position	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep eyes on ball as it leaves the thrower’s hand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relax fingers and arms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Continue to watch the ball all the way into the glove	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catch the ball in the pocket of the glove, giving slightly with impact of the ball. Immediately cover the ball with the free hand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points – Catch a thrown ball below the waist

1. Explain the technique of catching with a glove (e.g., using bare hand to hold onto the ball).
2. Explain to the athlete that it may be necessary to adjust their feet to receive the ball in front of the body.
3. Practice getting the hands under the ball to catch it.
4. Reduce the size of the ball as the athlete’s skill improves.
5. As skill improves, gradually increase the distance of the throw.
6. Demonstrate how to drop a ball (a bouncy ball) and catch it after it rebounds back into the air.
7. Have the athlete practice throwing the ball straight up and catching it before it hits the ground.

Faults & Fixes Chart – Catch a thrown ball below the waist

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete does not track the ball into the glove.	Use lighter, softer balls that are easier to track	Ball Color Drill
Athlete cannot keep the glove open to receive the ball.	Try using other objects without glove such as beanbags	Self-toss
Athlete drops the ball once it hits the glove.	Encourage the non-glove hand to cover ball in the glove	Self-toss Above and Below Catching Drill
Athlete moves hands out of proper position for a ‘below the waist’ catch.	Use whiffle balls or safety balls Have them catch from a seated position	Above and Below Catching Drill



Catch a ball above the waist

Skill Progression – Catch a thrown ball above the waist

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Stand, with your feet shoulder width apart, in relaxed position facing thrower, while wearing a softball glove	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assume correct “above-the-waist” catch position	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep eyes on the ball as it leaves the thrower’s hand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Place hands in line with flight of ball. The athlete must be able to see under, through or above hands as ball approaches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relax fingers and arms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Continue to watch the ball all the way into the glove	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catch the ball in the pocket of the glove, giving slightly with impact of the ball. Immediately cover the ball with the free hand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals			

Teaching Points – Catch a thrown ball above the waist

1. Explain the technique of catching with a glove (e.g., using bare hand to cover the ball; looking through the webbing; etc.).
2. Practice positioning the athlete’s entire body under the catch. Explain to the athlete that it may be necessary to adjust their feet to receive the ball in front of the body.
3. Emphasize the importance of catching the ball with the glove, not with the body.
4. Demonstrate the many heights at which this type of catch can be made (e.g., in a crouch, leaping, running, etc.).
5. Practice all of the catching skills with a variety of low impact balls, i.e. tennis ball, rag ball, foam ball etc., before progressing to a regulation softball. These low impact balls serve three main purposes: they bounce, they don’t hurt bare hands, and they are highly visible.

Faults & Fixes Chart – Catch a thrown ball above the waist

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete does not track the ball into the glove.	Use lighter, softer balls that are easier to track	Self-toss
Athlete cannot keep the glove open to receive the ball.	Try using other objects without glove such as beanbags	Self-toss
Athlete drops the ball once it hits the glove.	Encourage the non-glove hand to cover ball in the glove	Self-toss Above and Below Catching Drill
Athlete moves hands out of proper position for a ‘above the waist’ catch.	Use whiffle balls or safety balls Have them catch from a seated position	Above and Below Catching Drill



Catching Drills



Above and Below Catching Drill

Designed to improve basic skill of catching

Drill Focus: hand position

1. Have athlete remove their glove
2. Using a larger ball (volleyball, soccer ball), stand about 4-6 feet in front of the athlete.
3. Gently toss the ball to the athlete. You can vary the toss to be above or below their waist.
4. Athlete has to say “high to the sky” or “down to the ground”, depending upon where the ball is when they catch it.
5. Gradually add the glove for the athlete, and then begin using a softball
6. Other variations of this drill include change distance (closer or further apart), ball type (large, soft, whiffle, bean bag), and position of athletes (standing, kneeling, sitting)

Self-Toss Catching Drill

Drill Focus: confidence in catching a thrown ball

1. Each athlete has their own ball and glove
2. They toss the ball up in the air and catch it
3. As they gain confidence, have them toss the ball higher
4. Use safety balls if necessary to alleviate fear of being hurt by the ball
5. Add a competitive component by seeing who can toss the ball the highest to make the catch