



Throwing

to propel or project through the air by a forward motion of the hand and arm

The skill of throwing in softball is an integral part of a team’s defense. Throwing is how defensive players get the ball from one player to another. They “throw” the ball through the air to a teammate in order to try and get one of the offensive players (batter/runners) “out”.

Grip – The athlete should grip the ball with 3 fingers across the seam of the ball when possible, with the little finger riding loosely on the ball. The knuckle lines under the fingertips should rest on the seam. This is so the fingers can pull down on the seams during release. (Athletes with smaller hands may need to use 4 fingers. Extra-large hands may be able to use two fingers.) The thumb is located under the ball beneath the index finger. The ball should not be in the palm of the hand.

Grip

Skill Progression – Demonstrate the correct grip

| Your Athlete Can | Never | Sometimes | Often |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Identify a softball | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hold the ball with the index, middle, and ring fingers spread on top, thumb under the ball, and pinky (smallest finger) on the side of the ball | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Place fingertips across seams with knuckle lines resting on seams | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Leave space between web of thumb and ball | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Squeeze the ball lightly with finger tips | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Totals | | | |





Special Olympics Softball Coaching Guide Teaching Softball Skills



Teaching Points – Demonstrate the correct grip

A common problem:

1. Variation: Athletes with small hands may place all four fingers on top of the ball, with thumb underneath.
2. Athletes with very large hands may try a two fingered grip with thumb underneath.
3. A too tight grip can prevent proper spin on the ball. The grip should be firm but not too tight, thus allowing the wrist to be flexible which creates backspin.
4. Touch the athlete's fingertips with your hands. Place the athlete's fingers in the correct position.
5. The finger pressure on the ball should be evenly distributed



Faults & Fixes Chart – Demonstrate the correct grip

| Error | Correction | Drill Reference |
|---|---|-------------------|
| Athlete holds the grip too tight | Make sure ball is not in the palm of the hand. Make sure athlete has finger pressure evenly spaced | Wrist Snap Drill |
| Athlete holds the grip too loose | Make sure the athlete is holding the ball with a tighter and even grip | Wrist Snap Drill |
| Athlete does not grip the ball with the finger tips | Ask the athlete to pick up the ball with their finger tips Manually adjust the athlete’s fingers so that they are using their finger tips and not the palm of their hand | Finger Tips Drill |



Underhand Throw

While the majority of throws will be an overhand throw, there are many game situations when an underhand throw is more appropriate. A few examples of when you would use an underhand throw in softball are as follows:

1. Ball is fielded by the shortstop with a force out at second. If the ball is fairly close to second base, it might be better for the shortstop to toss the ball to the second baseman underhanded.
2. Ball is hit to the pitcher as he/she moves toward first base. An underhand toss might be a safer throw to ensure the force out at first base.

Skill Progression – Throw the ball underhand

| Your Athlete Can | Never | Sometimes | Often |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Position feet parallel, at shoulders width apart, pointing towards the target | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Place weight on right foot/(dominant foot) or (throwing arm side) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bring the throwing hand and arm back in a pendulum-style swing with the palm facing forward | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| At top of the backswing, take a step forward with the left foot, while bending the knees | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Swing arm forward, releasing ball when fingers are pointing at target | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Allow back foot to step up parallel to forward foot, a bit more than shoulder width apart | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Totals | | | |

Teaching Points – Throw the ball underhand

1. Demonstrate the proper techniques for throwing.
2. Physically guide athletes through the throwing motion.
3. Place footprints on the ground and have athletes follow the pattern for throwing.
4. Have athletes practice throwing the ball, making any necessary corrections in throwing force.
5. Throw the ball at a target two meters away.
6. Increase the throwing distance at target in increments of 1.5 meters until athletes can accurately hit at a target 18 meters away.
7. Point out the advantage of finishing the underhand throw in a defensive ready position.



Faults & Fixes Chart – Underhand Throw

| Error | Correction | Drill Reference |
|--|--|------------------------|
| Athlete releases the ball too early and the ball falls short of target | Encourage athlete to hold ball longer to ensure a higher release point | The Star Drill |
| Athlete releases the ball too late and the ball misses the target | Encourage athlete to release ball sooner to ensure a lower release point. Demonstrate the correct release point | The Star Drill |
| Athlete steps with the wrong foot forward | Place a piece of tape on the correct foot. Re-emphasize the proper technique with demonstration and physical prompt if necessary | The Star Drill |
| Athlete has improper weight transfer and the ball lands wide of target | Provide varying targets from left to right to reinforce bringing ball across body (or to prevent across body weight transfer) | The Star Drill |



Overhand Throw

Demonstrate the proper overhand throwing technique (right-handed)

The overhand throw is used by infielders and outfielders as they attempt to make outs by properly throwing the softball to the desired target. Quickness, velocity, and accuracy are desired components of a properly thrown softball. This is achieved through proper grip, arm circle & release, and lower body drive.

Using proper grip of the softball, keep hand on top of ball as you reach the position where the palm is facing away from target above the shoulder (do not lock elbow). The back foot starts to pivot and turns the body sideways. The elbow should be at the same level as the shoulder and the hand is above the head. The transfer of weight from back to front begins as the elbow leads the arm into the release position (above the head in line with the shoulder). The arm circle path from start to release point is on line to the target. As the ball is released, the fingers will pull down with force across the seams. The thumb leads the hand downward towards the ground upon release.

The follow-through: The hand follows through down and towards the glove-side. The back leg should continue following through (as if stepping). The goal at time of release is to create complete vertical backspin on the ball.

Skill Progression – Demonstrate the proper overhand throwing technique (right-handed)

| Your Athlete Can | Never | Sometimes | Often |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Grip the ball correctly | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stand relaxed with feet at shoulders width apart, facing the target | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Your glove hand, throwing hand, and the ball should be together at your mid-section. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Rotate hips and pivot on left foot, while stepping back with your right foot. Left shoulder now faces the target | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Start the ball back in a downward motion with the ball facing away from the player. As you turn your throwing side your glove side and hips should turn and point toward the target. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The ball continues in a circular motion back keeping the weight over the back foot. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The player's glove side will start to turn back away from the target (the same direction it started in) as the ball and throwing hand start upward. The glove side elbow will lead the ball up and be near the player's ear. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The player's weight will now be moving toward the front foot and the player will start to lead with the ball by straightening the elbow, snapping the wrist and fingers, and releasing the ball toward the target out in front of the player's head. The player should try to throw the ball by using his/her fingers instead of pushing with the hand. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| After releasing the ball the player's throwing arm should continue down across the player's body in the follow through. (wrist snap) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Totals

Special Olympics Softball Coaching Guide

Teaching Softball Skills



Teaching Points – Demonstrate the proper overhand throwing technique (right-handed)

1. Stand beside the athlete. Place softball in the athlete’s hand and move his/her arm through a throwing motion.
2. Emphasize form. Stress one aspect of form at a time, work on it for a few minutes or for a certain number of throws and then move on to another aspect of form. Include a sufficient number of form throws at increasing distances in preparation for all-out throws in practice or competition.
3. Practice throwing over objects placed at different distances from a line to get proper release angle and throwing arc. Use football goal posts, improvised targets made from bamboo poles, wooden dowels, broomsticks and string or adapt other devices to practice releasing the ball.
4. **Lower Body Drive**
 - ♦ Open instep of the throwing foot slightly toward the target. (45degrees). This is the pivot foot. The pivot foot turns out toward the target to begin the throwing sequence (picture insert) see Ace guide
 - ♦ The foot on the glove-side should land at a 45 degree angle when transfer begins.
 - ♦ Weight should be balanced on the balls of the feet.
 - ♦ Lower body transfer begins as the front foot (glove-side) steps on line to the target, with the arm in the “fingers to the sky” position.
 - ♦ Weight transfer begins as the glove-side arm pulls down and into the chest, as the throwing arm comes forward into the release position.
 - ♦ Lower body weight transfer completes as the ball is released and follow through occurs. The ball-side leg (back leg) continues forward (drag of the foot).
5. Tell your athletes that the ball will go where their hand is pointing when they let go of it.
6. “Flipping” the wrist is another word for emphasizing “snapping” the wrist.
7. Use a striped ball when executing throwing drills.

Wrist Snap



Trunk Rotation



Pivot, Step, Turn, Throw



Step, Throw, Follow Through



Faults & Fixes Chart – Demonstrate the proper overhand throwing technique (right-handed)

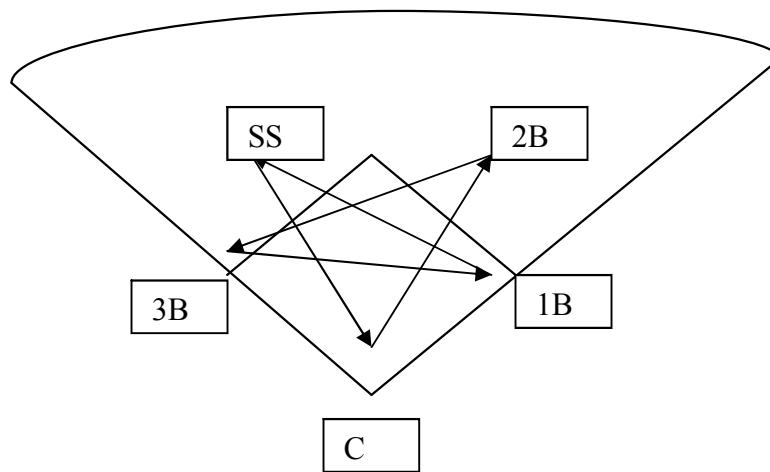
| Error | Correction | Drill Reference |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| Athlete releases the ball too early and the ball falls short of target | Adjust release point | The Star Drill – shorter distance |
| Athlete releases the ball too late and the ball misses the target | Adjust releae point | The Star Drill – shorter distance |
| Athlete has lack of velocity and accuracy on their throw | Correct follow through of athlete | The Star Drill – shorter distance |
| Athlete throws wide left or wide right | Make sure their feet are and glove hand are pointing at their target and the follow through ends facing the target | |



Throwing Drills

The Star Drill

The Star Drill is a drill that will help athletes improve their throwing skills.



1. Players get in the basic infield positions: (first, second, third base, shortstop, and catcher. The distances do not have to be regulation. Use varying distances and progression towards actual distance.
2. Catcher starts by throwing the ball to second base.
3. Second base throws to third base.
4. Third base throws to first base.
5. First base throws to shortstop.
6. Shortstop throws to catcher. This completes the “star” pattern.
7. To make the drill more game-like, time how quickly your infielders can make a star vs. your outfielders.
8. Add runners (with helmets) and have them run around the bases before the players can complete the star.

Wrist Snap Drill



Target Throw Drill



Cut-off and Relay Drill



Line Drill

