



Catching a Thrown Ball

Like hitting, the skill of catching a thrown ball is difficult for a young player to perform because 1.) it requires good hand-eye coordination and 2.) most young players are afraid of the ball.

If your players are struggling playing catch with each other, have them take their gloves off and try using bigger balls like volleyballs or beach balls. Using a bigger ball will make it easier for your players to focus on the ball, which really helps with their hand-eye coordination. Also, a bigger ball will help your players use both hands when they catch the ball. With their gloves off, it will be nearly impossible for them to catch the ball with just one hand.

When teaching young players how to catch a thrown ball focus on the following:

- Ready Position: “athletic” ready position – knees slightly bent, weight on balls of the feet, shoulders, hips and feet are square to the ball.
- 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 ball in the middle of the body
- When the ball is above the waist, catch the ball with fingers toward the sky: **“High to the Sky.”**
- When the ball is below the waist, catch the ball with fingers toward the ground: **“Down to the Ground.”**

Coach, you need to remember that young players are so afraid of getting hit by the ball that they will try to avoid it rather than try to catch it. This is why your players will move their heads, and sometimes their entire body, as they try to catch the ball. Your challenge is to remove the fear of the ball by using safety balls, and by teaching your players the proper way to catch a thrown ball. That way you won't have to say “don't be afraid of the ball” over and over.

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