

The catcher has to be, day in and day out, the most stable position on the field. He's involved in every aspect of the game. He must be a "great communicator" with the umpire, pitcher, teammates, as well as the coach.

This must be done with a level of consistency from the first pitch. Catchers need to establish this method of communication and build on it during the game.

Catcher's pre-game routine

These series of quick, pre-game drills can be done before or after infield. Total time of all these drills should be five minutes or less. Make sure you teach the drills in practice before you throw it on the catcher before the game.

1. Spots: From a short distance, throw to the catcher in all locations. Corners, low pitches, inside and outside pitches. Get him to concentrate on receiving the ball and keeping the mitt in the strike zone. (Eight to 10 throws; use two baseballs to speed this up)

2. Sways: Get the catcher's legs loose by throwing pitches outside of the strike zone. Work on the swaying technique (opposite knee to the ground). This improves receiving range. (Two or three throws each way)

3. Dead ball block: Put a ball on the ground where a ball would be if he was blocking a ball. Work on technique. Check body position for "holes": Glove, elbows, shoulders. Move the ball around, work on going to his left and right. (Three to five blocks)

4. Block: Throw balls in dirt or grass. Tell the catcher what pitch is coming and have him work on the actual technique of blocking the ball. Again, this is an area of teaching and building confidence in the catcher's blocking ability. (Four to six balls)

5. Live block and attack: Throw live fastballs and breaking. Have the catcher make the decision on "catch or block". This gets him to focus on watching the ball. After blocking, have the catcher attack the ball as if a runner is on first or second. (Four to six balls) *Note: don't beat him up before a game.*

6. Hard crosses: This is the pitch that's near the outside edge of the batter's box. The catcher throws his opposite leg or "crosses" his leg over to get the mitt to the spot to knock down the ball. This is an extreme block -- just get a piece of the ball to keep a run from scoring. (Two each side)

7. Quarter eagles: This is foot work in throwing. Quarter turn of the body with ball loaded in mitt ... quarter eagle. Work on pitches all over the strike zone. Mix in a pitch-out on both sides of the plate. Catcher can throw to additional player. This drill will allow catcher to work on proper foot work on all pitches. Work on the jab-step and no-step techniques. (Four to six balls; if no infield, throw more)

8. Plays at the plate: Throw 70'-90' throws to catcher ... Two or three bounces to simulate a play at the plate. Have the catcher turn to his left or right to simulate throws from left field, center field and right field. Extra catcher can put "pressure" on catcher. End with a good throw to "nail the runner" at the plate.

9. Remind catcher to "have fun!"