

Fastball Grip & Pre-Motion

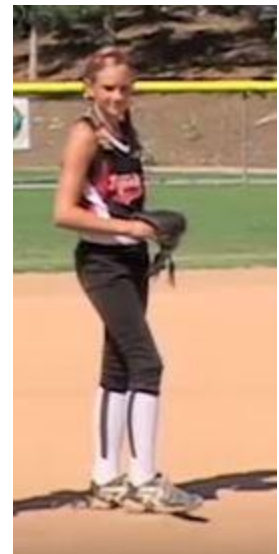
Grip:

- The pitcher should find the C or horseshoe in the seams and place her index finger and middle finger on the seam.
- The thumb should be on the seam underneath the ball.
- Should be a space between the thumb and the index finger and between the ball and the palm of the hand.
- This grip will allow the ball to be thrown with a four-seam rotation for greater accuracy.
- On the pitch, the ball should roll off the index and middle fingers.
- The pitcher should be using the exact same grip every time she throws a fastball.
- Gripping the ball on the seams will allow for greater control and will give the pitcher something to pull against to get better speed on the pitch.



Pre-motion:

- A right-handed pitcher should stand with her right foot forward on the rubber and her left behind the rubber.
- Weight is on the right foot.
- Hands are apart.
- The pitcher gets the sign from the catcher, brings her hands together in front of her body and shifts her weight to her back foot.
- She takes a deep breath to ensure she's set.
- Then the pitcher either swings both arms back or swings the pitching arm back and brings the glove to the opposite thigh.
- When rocking back the pitcher's shoulders should not open too early; they should remain square to the target.



Footwork

- Draw a line in the middle of the rubber – a right-handed pitcher should place the inside of her right foot on that line (opposite for lefthander).
- Her right foot should be pointed straight at the middle of the plate.
- It's important for pitchers to set up their feet the same way and in the same location every time.
- The pitcher should imagine a straight line running from the middle of the rubber to the middle of home plate (or the coach could even draw one). This is the power line.
- When going through her motion, all of the pitcher's weight should be centered over the power line.
- When the pitcher strides forward, pushing off the rubber with her right foot, the stride foot (left foot for a right-handed pitcher) should land at a 45-degree angle to the plate and it should be a little left of the power line.
- The right foot then drags forward. The pitcher's drag mark should not be straight, that would mean she is not opening her hips on the pitch.
- The pitcher should also be aiming to drag hard through the pitch for better control and to better identify the release point.



Arm Motion

- On the stride forward, the pitcher's glove hand should go up above her shoulder. This will help push her weight back.
- The pitcher should then pull the glove down forcefully as she brings her ball hand down. The glove should make a slapping sound against the thigh of her front leg.
- She then brings the ball forward and tries to snap the ball to the plate as strong as she can. Her elbow should stay in during the throwing motion.



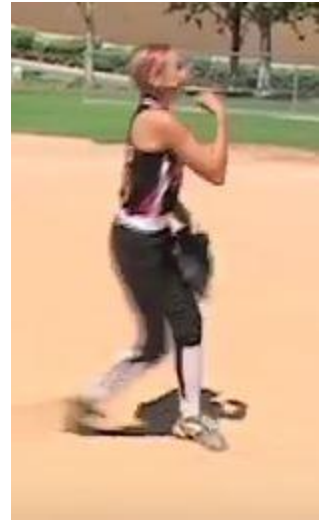
Body Rotation

- After the stride forward, the pitcher raises the ball above her head – at this point her body should be completely open and positioned sideways toward the plate.
- Eyes should remain focused on home plate.
- The pitcher's hips must remain open so that the arm can go straight toward the plate.
- Opening the hips too soon will push the arm angle out and slow down the speed of the pitch.
- The pitcher's hips turn right after the ball is thrown.
- A lot of a pitcher's power comes from how hard and fast she can rotate her body.
- The pitcher should try to close as hard as she can.



Ball Release

- As the pitching hand moves toward the plate, the pitcher's fingertips should be behind the ball.
- She should then try to pull as hard as she can – her goal should be to spin the ball as many times as she can between her and the catcher.
- More spin leads to better control and greater speed.
- After the ball is released, the pitcher's fingertips should be pointed straight up.
- On the follow-through, the pitching hand should come up to the shoulder.
- Also regarding the follow-through, the back or drag foot should never go past the stride foot.



Common Problems

- **Side-Stepping** – This occurs when the pitcher steps too far to either side of the power line with her stride foot. To correct the issue, draw a power line on the ground and place a mat or some other object at the stride point to the side of where she should be stepping. Her object then is not to step on the mat when striding.
- **Poor Control** – This is most often due to the pitching arm not pointing straight at the target. To fix this, stress that the pitcher should be bringing the ball straight back at the beginning of the pitching motion and then pointing straight at the target as she is bringing the ball forward and up. So the ball should not be disappearing behind her back on the windup.
- **Lack of Velocity** – Most often this can be due to poor mechanics. Watch the pitcher's entire motion and fix any breakdowns in form. Also, to boost velocity stress being aggressive to pitchers. They should be throwing as hard as they can while still maintaining good mechanics.
- **Lack of Power** – This typically occurs when the pitcher is landing with her weight forward or is shifting her weight forward too soon. To fix this issue, stress bringing the glove up high and also bringing the stride foot up high. Tell her she should be trying to show the bottom of her cleat to the catcher when striding forward.



Equipment & Practice Schedule

Equipment:

- Pitchers need a bucket of balls. Get a low bucket so if the catcher sits on it the pitcher won't be throwing too high. Stress pitching low.

Practice Schedule:

- **8 and under** – practice once or twice a week for 15 minutes each session. She should aim to throw about 50 pitches during those time periods.
- **10 and under** – practice 2 to 3 times a week for 30 minutes each session. She should aim to throw 75 to 100 pitches during those time periods.
- **12 and under** – practice at least 3 times a week. When old enough to be involved in travel ball they should be throwing every other day.