

die Position -2- der Verteidigung auf dem Spielfeld und dem Kurzzeichen -C- hat innerhalb der Verteidigung eine der komplexesten Aufgaben. Nur ein erfahrener Spieler kann den hohen Ansprüchen dieser Position gerecht werden. Aus der physisch-technischen Sicht muß ein Catcher stark und schnell sein, einen präzisen Wurf, einen guten Fang für schwierige Würfe und eine starke Resistenz haben. Mit wenigen Worten, er muß ein gutes Beispiel für seine Kameraden sein, aggressiv aber kontrolliert.

Obwohl gesagt wird, die Catcher müssen eine kräftige Figur haben, bestätigt die Realität, daß es unter den Catchern alle Größen gibt. Ein großer und kräftiger Catcher hat jedoch Vorteile gegenüber einem kleineren da er hohe oder seitlich geworfene Bälle besser fangen kann. Die Catcher haben eine hohe Verantwortung in der Verteidigung da sie als einzige Spieler die Übersicht über das gesamte Spielfeld haben und nehmen aus diesem Grund eine Führungsposition innerhalb der Verteidigung ein. Ein Catcher muß ein guter Beobachter der gegnerischen [Batter](#) sein um deren Schwächen und Stärken am Schlagmal zu erkennen. So weiß er bei welchen Würfen ein Batter Schwierigkeiten bekommt und gibt diese Information in Form von Zeichen an den [Pitcher](#), daß dieser einen ganz bestimmten [Pitch](#) wirft um den Batter schon am Schlag [Strike out](#) zu machen.

## 1. DEFENSIVE PRIORITY

- The best catcher is a shortstop minus the range
- Even good-hitting catchers must be defense oriented - might get 4 at bats himself in a game but will be trying to stop dozens of opposing team batters.

## 2. PHYSICALITY

- Flexibility - to get down in the receiving stance, move laterally on loose hips
- Quickness - to pounce on stray pitches, react to baserunners
- Strong base - powerful legs
- Durability - but not necessarily size - better to have (or be) a tough, wirey catcher who can take the hits than a big guy prone to injury
- Accurate, powerful arm - best driven by quick leg speed

## 3. LEADERSHIP

- The team's on field captain.
- Good communication skills with pitcher and fielders
- Enthusiasm - always being watched by team mates and other team (needs to project positive aggression, confidence for the team)
- Hustle - leadership by example

## 4. MENTAL MAKE-UP

- Intelligent, able to outthink opposing batters
- Excellent memory for what works, what doesn't
- Baseball sense - awareness of the game situation
- Proactive - sets the tone of the game, determines the next pitch, must anticipate the opposition - an instinct for what's next
- Unselfish - the better the catcher, the more the pitcher looks like a hero
- Mental toughness - willing to stay in there
- High level of self motivation (early to practice, ready for each pitch, and everything in between)
- Will make a good coach some day

## **THE ROLE OF A CATCHER**

The catcher must be the teams leader. They have the entire field in front of them and are able to read and react to every situation. While the ball is in play, they are the only position that never has their back turned towards the action.

Everything must go through the catcher. They are responsible for calling pitches, keeping up the pace of the game, reacting to all situations, and also being an on-field psychologist. They must be able to get everything out of their pitchers and their teammates.

You've heard the old cliché that a championship team must be strong up the middle. That begins with the catcher. A team's destiny can lie in the hands of their catchers. If a team is short on talent, experience, and desire behind the plate, then their championship hopes have diminished. Conversely, if a team has a fierce competitor that will be able to inspire the team and motivate them to new heights, then the possibility of greatness will exist.

A catcher must be able to anticipate all situations from bunt defense to relay communications. The catcher must take into account the speed of the runner, the playing conditions, the type of athletes involved, the game situations, the playing surface, and other important aspects. A catcher must have had enough drilling and practice that they do not have to think about the situation in much detail. They must be able to react and respond to the situation given.

The catcher has to be the toughest guy in the yard. He must take command and demand respect and performance from his pitching staff and other position players. When a crucial situation arises, the catcher must step-up and take charge of the game.

**The physical aspects of catching require total concentration on the fundamentals. When getting into the position to receive the ball, catchers should be as comfortable as possible. When taking up this position, they should make sure they are far enough behind the batter to avoid being hit by the bat as the batter swings .**

### **Set Position:**

1. Feet should be placed, shoulder width apart.
2. In the squat position, the catcher should feel comfortable, balanced and up on the balls of his feet.
3. Always give his pitcher a good target, by placing your catching mit out in front, early enough so the pitcher can focus on it. Keep the shoulders square facing the pitcher.
4. Signs are given from the set position. Making sure the glove conceals them from the coach the third base.

### **Receiving Position:**

*After giving the signs, catcher shifts into this position.*

1. Right foot three or four inches behind left foot.
2. Thighs parallel to the ground, and back straight.
3. Glove hand extended toward the pitcher.
4. For safety the catcher protects his throwing hand from a foul tip, by placing it behind his back. When there are runners on base, his throwing hand should be tucked behind his mit in a closed fist position.

### **Throwing To A Base:**

1. Catchers start their motion towards their target, by being up on the balls of their feet.
2. Right-handed catchers drop their right foot back a little.
3. Grasping the ball across the seams, and not rushing the throw affords the best opportunity for an accurate throw.

### **Catching Pop Ups:**

1. On pop up behind them catchers turn their back towards the pitcher, as the spin on the ball will bring the flight of the ball back towards them.
2. Catchers hold their mask until they are ready to catch the ball, then throw it to the side.

### **Blocking Balls Thrown Into The Dirt:**

1. Dropping down on both knees, and turn the mit over and have it touching the ground.
2. Always shift toward the ball, keeping your shoulders as square as possible, facing toward the pitcher.
3. Arms tucked as close to the body as possible.
4. Concentrate on blocking the ball and keeping it in front of you.

### **Tagging Runner - Play At Home Plate:**

1. Positioning - About two feet in front of home plate and with the left foot pointing towards third base, the catcher blocks the path of the base runner. This is a legal positions and for safety the catchers' knees are slightly flexed to help prepare for a possible collision.
2. When receiving the ball, the left foot is planted while pivoting on the right foot. Securing the ball by placing his other hand over his mit, tagging the runner.
3. While tagging the runner, the catcher does so with the back part of his glove facing the runner, so the runner can not attempt to jar the ball lose.

### **Fielding Bunts:**

1. If, the ball is still rolling, the catcher scoops it up with two hands, fielding the ball with his bare hand only if it has stopped.
2. Using a circling motion he spins facing the base he is throwing to, and always keeps the ball directly in front of him.

Catching is not an easy position to play. A young player attempting to become a good catcher must be willing to master the basic techniques.

### **Stance**

The signal stance and the receiving or ready stance are used in catching.

#### **Receiving Stance**

- position body directly behind the plate and square to the pitcher
- feet are shoulder-width apart and even with each other (not staggered)
- distribute weight evenly and on the balls of the feet
- thighs are parallel to the ground and back is straight
- extend the glove hand comfortably towards the pitcher with arm slightly bent
- place the glove hand at a slight angle with the wrist cocked so the glove face is toward the pitcher
- position the glove hand in the middle of the plate just above the batter's knees
- with no runners on base, the catcher will receive the ball with one hand and protect the throwing hand by placing it behind the right leg or back

#### **Signal Stance**

- should be comfortable and relaxed with body square to the pitcher and weight balanced on the balls of the feet
- upper legs rest on the calves with the feet and knees comfortably spread and back straight
- once the signal is given then change into the receiving stance

### **Signs**

Signs should be kept simple. Basic signs like one finger for fastball, two for a curve, and three for a change-up are used.

### **Receiving the Pitch**

- catch the ball with the arm comfortably extended in a relaxed position
- “give” slightly with the pitch
- catch the ball as close to the plate as possible watching the ball all the way to the glove
- for balls above the waist, catch the ball with the fingers pointing up
- balls below the waist the fingers point down
- stay low to not obstruct the umpire's view
- try not to blink when the batter swings at a pitch

### **Blocking Low Pitches**

- drop to both knees with body square to the ball
- keep hips and rear end down
- place the glove and bare hand (palm forward and thumb at side of hand – not pointing forward) between the knees
- both arms are slightly bent and pulled into the sides of the body with the chin down and tucked into the chest
- cup the body forward to keep the ball in front of the body
- keep eyes open and on the ball

**Throwing:** For the young catcher making a throw to a base after receiving the pitch, the important factors to emphasize are:

- Establish good body balance
- Get a good grip on the ball
- Throw the ball to the best of your ability

While the correct technique of throwing involves the two-step method, young catchers should use the three-step method of throwing until their arm has matured enough to produce an accurate throw with only two steps.

### **Three-Step Method (right handed throwing):**

- keeping the body compact and the knees bent to develop maximum push, move out quickly in the direction of the throw with the left foot
- with the right leg the catcher plants and uses it as a pivot point as they turn the body slightly
- with the left leg point toe directly towards the target and brace against it and drive forward with body and arm
- eyes on ball and then target
- throw overhand using the cross seam grip and start by cocking the arm in back of the ear

**Tagging the runner:** When applying the tag to a runner at home plate, the catcher should position themselves with the heels of both feet on the edge of the plate. The catcher keeps their left foot in contact with the plate and with their right foot, moves to receive the ball. As the catcher catches the ball, they drop the left knee to the ground blocking the plate from the runner. The ball is gripped firmly with the bare hand and held snugly in the pocket of the glove. The catcher simply puts the glove in the path of the slide, showing the back of the glove to the runner. If there is no slide, the tag should be applied to the runner's midsection as they run towards the plate.

**Catching Pop-Ups:** For pop-ups in the general vicinity of home plate, the catcher should turn their back to the infield. Because of the nature of the rotation of the ball as it comes off the bat, the trajectory as it returns to the ground will be back toward the infield. Consequently, it is much easier for the catcher to turn around and have the ball come towards them than it is to have to chase after the ball as it sails away from them. As soon as the ball is popped up, the catcher should take off their mask and locate the ball. Once the catcher has moved to the general area of the play, the mask is discarded in the opposite direction, and the catch is made. The most secure method of catching the ball is by using both hands in the same technique as an outfielder. In situations where the pop-up is some distance from home plate, within the infield, the catcher should let the infielders make the play.