

## Catching - Signs

### Giving Signs

The catcher gives signs to the pitcher and the team for what defense to play. This may be a specific bunt defense or 1st and 3rd defense or a pickoff play. All fielders should watch the catcher before each pitch to pick up any signs.

### Pitch Signs

When you give signs to the pitcher, be careful that only the pitcher sees them. Place your glove on the outside of your knee to help block the view of the third base coach. Since you cannot do that with your right knee, make sure that your knee points in the direction of the pitcher to keep the first base coach from seeing the signs. As you give the signs, make sure your fingers are well spread so the pitcher can easily see them. Keep your fingers at cup level -- if you drop them too low, the opposing team may pick them up.

### No Runners On Base

With no runners on base, flash one sign. If the hitter looks back to try and pick up the signs, move to the signs that you use when runners are on base.

### Runners On Base

Runners on base will try to pick up the signs for the pitcher. Obviously, a runner on second has the best view of the signs, but a runner a few steps off first may also be able to see the signs. To combat this, have different methods of delivering signs. Remember to keep it simple and have a few different methods for delivering signs. For example, flash three or four signs with the second sign as the pitch. Or, have one sign as the indicator and the next sign given after that as the pitch. If three fingers is the indicator, and the next sign delivered is the index finger, a fastball is the pitch. By having a couple of simple methods to deliver the signs you can quickly change methods if you feel the other team has picked them up.

### Defensive Signs

Normally, the first sign given is the defensive sign. The coach relays this sign to the catcher and then the catcher gives it to the team. Have a default defense in place for each situation so the catcher doesn't have to give a defensive sign each time a runner reaches base or the on base situation changes. The defensive sign cannot be given in the same manner as the catcher uses for the pitch. All players must be able to see the sign being given.

EXAMPLE: Let's say with a man on second, you have two bunt defensive plays and one pickoff play that the coach can call. You may determine that going to your mask with your throwing hand is the first play, chest protector is the second play, and your right knee is the pickoff. Then all you need is an indicator (say wiping the ground with your throwing hand) to let the defense know a play is being called. You can add other things to make it difficult for the opposing team to pick the signs. Maybe it's the second sign after the indicator is the play.

## Catching - Throwing

Your ability to throw out a runner is influenced not only by the speed of the baserunner, but also by the ability of the pitcher to hold the runner close and deliver the ball quickly to the plate. While it's important to work with the pitcher to make sure this is done, once he has started his delivery, it's out of your control.

To have a chance to throw out runners on a consistent basis, work on delivering the ball quickly and accurately to the base. This requires good fundamentals on transferring the ball from your glove to your throwing hand, footwork, and throwing mechanics. Sound fundamentals can make up for a lack of arm strength.

Adjustments will need to be made depending on the location of the pitch, but for now assume the pitch is a fastball down the middle of the plate.

### Prior To Catching The Ball

As the ball approaches, start setting yourself up for the throw by pointing your right knee toward the first base dugout. This causes your hips to rotate to the right and gets you closer to having your hips closed when you throw the ball.

### Grip

As with all positions, try to grip the ball across all four seams. Throw the ball with a [HYPERLINK "http://](http://)

www.qcbaseball.com/skills/pc\_throwing2.aspx" \l "rotation" [12 - 6 rotation](#). Why is this essential? When throwing the ball, any tail pulls the fielder off the base and into the line of the runner. This is not only a dangerous situation for the fielder but the ball often ends up in the outfield.

## **Three Methods**

There are three primary methods for throwing the ball from the catchers position.

### **Shuffle And Throw**

As you catch the ball, pop up and forward to throw the ball. As you do this, shift your feet from parallel to the mound to perpendicular to the mound. Land your right foot first and complete your throwing stride toward the base with your left foot.

### **Pivot And Throw**

This method takes a very strong arm and because of this, shouldn't be used by younger players. Simply pivot on your right foot, step with your left and throw. While it is faster than the Shift method, it's more difficult because to achieve that quickness, your weight can't be transferred fully to your front leg. You end up using your arm primarily to throw the ball without getting your body behind it.

### **Step And Throw**

Younger players tend to use this method due to lack of arm strength as required for the Shift method. With this method, take a small step with your right foot towards the target as you transfer the ball. This gets your momentum moving in that direction. Once you have planted your right foot, point your left shoulder toward the target step with your left foot and throw. This method is slower but helps younger player make a stronger and more accurate throw.