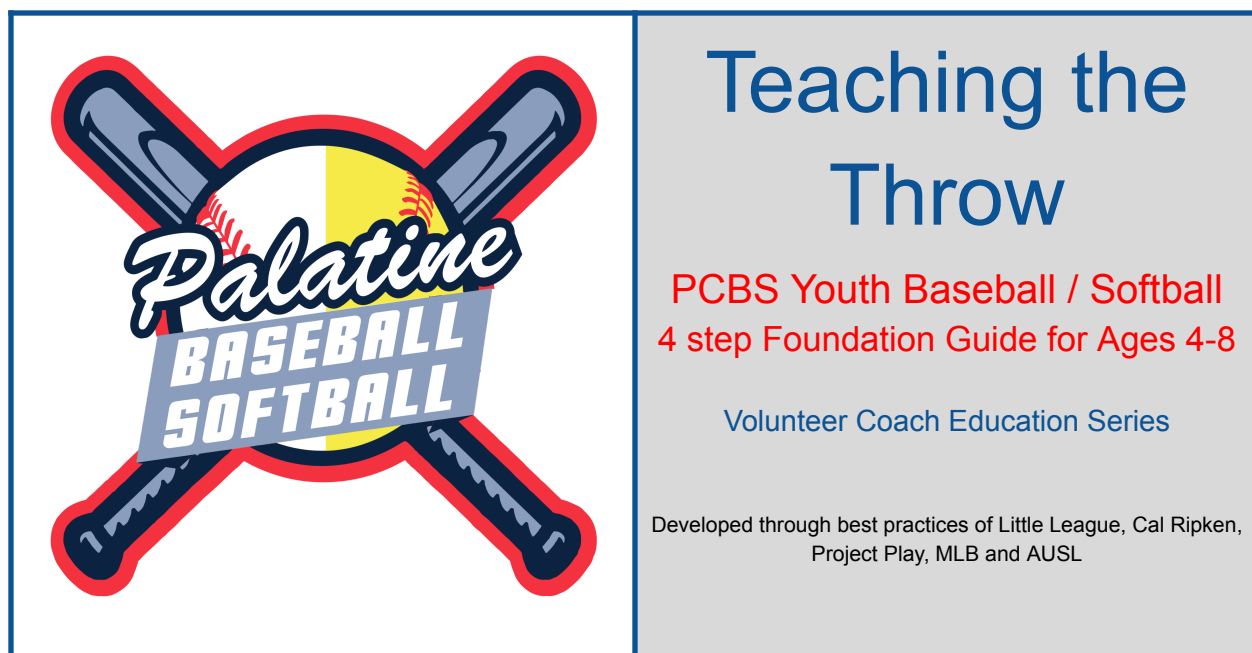


Tab 1



Teaching the Throw

PCBS Youth Baseball / Softball
4 step Foundation Guide for Ages 4-8

Volunteer Coach Education Series

Developed through best practices of Little League, Cal Ripken, Project Play, MLB and AUSL

About This Guide

This guide gives PCBS volunteer coaches a simple, repeatable 4-step system to teach young players (ages 4–8) how to throw a baseball correctly and safely. Each step is designed to be easy to memorize, easy to demonstrate, and easy for young athletes to remember on the field.

Young players at this stage are building foundational motor patterns. The goal is not velocity or accuracy — it is forming the right habits of grip, posture, arm path, and follow-through that will carry them forward through all levels of play.

Coaching Philosophy: What the Experts Say

This program draws from four leading youth sports organizations:

Little League	Teach mechanics before velocity. Keep it fun and structured for young players.
Cal Ripken	Use positive reinforcement. Focus on effort over outcome at ages 4–8.
Project Play	Prioritize early motor skill development and multi-sport movement patterns.
MLB Youth and AUSL	Demonstrate, don't just tell. Coaches must model each step clearly.

GOLDEN RULE FOR COACHES:

Show it.

Say it.

Do it together.

Celebrate the effort.

At ages 4–8, every child is a beginner. Make it fun, make it safe, and make it memorable.

The 4-Step System — Quick Reference

Post this on the dugout wall or print it as a pocket card. Coaches should be able to say all four cues from memory before the first practice.

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4
GRIP	STANCE	ARM ACTION	FOLLOW THROUGH
"Two fingers on top!"	"Point your toe!"	"Big L, let it go!"	"Bow to your partner!"

The 4 Steps — Detailed Coaching Guide

STEP 1

1

GRIP

How to hold the ball

WHY

Proper grip controls spin, direction, and arm stress. A correct two-finger grip across the seams reduces injury risk and builds good habits early. Even at ages 4–8, starting with the right grip matters.

SAY

"Place two fingers on top, thumb underneath."

Like you're holding a tiny hamburger

DO

Hold a ball and demonstrate slowly. Let each player hold the ball and check their grip individually. Look for fingers on top of the seams, not tucked into the palm. For players with very small hands, we can allow a three-finger grip. This is developmentally appropriate per Little League guidance.

WATCH

Common errors: Palming the ball (all fingers wrapped around); thumb on the side instead of below; death grip (squeezing too hard, tell them to 'hold it like a baby bird')

CUE

Memory Cue: "Two fingers on top!"

STEP 2

2

STANCE

Get your body ready

WHY

A proper throwing stance sets up alignment, balance, and power transfer. Cal Ripken and Little League both emphasize that young players must learn to step toward their target. This is the most commonly skipped fundamental at this age.

SAY

"Stand sideways to your target, then point your front toe at the person you're throwing to. Keep your feet shoulder-width apart!"

DO

Ask all players to stand sideways to you and point their toe at you. Walk the line and adjust foot position. Make a game of it: 'Freeze! Let me see where your toe is pointing.' Use orange cones to show the target direction.

WATCH

Common errors: Facing forward instead of sideways; feet too close together; stiff legs (remind them to have 'soft knees')

CUE

Memory Cue: "Point your toe!"

STEP 3

3

ARM ACTION

How to bring the arm back and throw

WHY

Proper arm path — forming an 'L' shape with the elbow — protects young arms and creates an efficient throwing motion. MLB's youth programs emphasize this checkpoint above all others for injury prevention.

SAY

"Bring your arm back, make a big letter L with your elbow, then release and point at your target!"

DO

Demonstrate the 'L' shape slowly. Have players mime the motion without a ball first. Then add the ball. Watch for elbow height. The elbow should be at or above shoulder level at the launch point. Use the call-and-response: 'What do we make?' → 'A big L!'

WATCH

Common errors: Pushing or shoveling the ball (no arm path); elbow dropping below the shoulder; 'short-arming' the throw by not fully extending; rushing and not forming the L

CUE

Memory Cue: "Big L, let it go!"

STEP 4

4

FOLLOW THROUGH

Finish the throw all the way

WHY

The follow-through determines accuracy and protects the arm. Without a proper follow-through, young players lose control and put extra stress on their elbow and shoulder. Project Play research shows finishing the motion is the skill most often skipped in informal youth practice.

SAY

"After you let go, let your arm swing all the way down. Pretend you're taking a bow. Look at where you threw it!"

DO

Show the bow motion exaggeratedly. After every throw in practice, call out 'Did you bow?' This creates the habit. Pair players to watch each other and give a thumbs up when they see a good bow. Praise publicly when players follow through correctly.

WATCH

Common errors: Stopping the arm mid-air after release; flinching or pulling back; not looking at the target; turning away before the throw is complete

CUE

Memory Cue: "Bow to your partner!"

Recommended Practice Activities

Use these drills in sequence. Spend 5–7 minutes per drill. Keep energy high with encouragement.

DRILL	HOW TO RUN IT	FOCUS STEP
Grip Check Circle	Players sit in a circle. The coach passes a ball. Each player shows their two-finger grip and says the cue: 'Two fingers on top!'	Step 1 - Grip
Toe Pointer Freeze	Pair players 10 feet apart. On 'Freeze!' They stop and hold their stance. The coach walks and checks foot position and toe direction toward the partner.	Step 2 - Stance
Big L Contest	Without balls, players mime the throwing motion in slow motion. The coach calls 'FREEZE at the L!' Players hold the position for 3 seconds. Great for checking elbow height.	Step 3 - Arm Action
The Bow Throw	Pairs throw to each other at a comfortable distance (8–12 ft). After EVERY throw, the thrower must bow. The partner gives a thumbs up only when they see the bow. Add the cues together: 'Grip, stance, L, bow!'	Step 4 - Follow Through
Full Motion Put-Together	The coach calls out each step while players throw: '1 - Grip! 2 - Stance! 3 - Big L! 4 - Bow!' Use this as a team closing routine at the end of every practice.	All 4 Steps

Safety, Development & Age-Appropriate Expectations

What to Expect at Ages 4–8

- Short attention spans - 5–7 minute drill segments are ideal
- Motor patterns are still forming. Repetition is the most powerful teacher
- 3-finger grips are fine for smaller hands. No need to force the 2-finger grip
- Throwing distances should stay short: 10–25 feet for most drills.
- Accuracy is secondary to mechanics at this stage. Focus on form and process. Results will occur naturally.

Arm Safety (Per Little League & MLB Youth)

- Warm up with light movement before any throwing (jumping jacks, arm circles)
- Follow pitch count and throwing limits. DO NOT push through pain
- If a player says their arm or elbow hurts, stop throwing immediately.
- No breaking balls, spin pitches, or maximum-effort throws at this age group
- Always use age-appropriate, softer training balls when available

Coach's Pocket Card — The 4 Cues

Memorize these four cues. Use them at every practice. The more consistently coaches use the same language, the faster players learn.

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4
GRIP	STANCE	ARM	FOLLOW
"Two fingers on top!"	"Point your toe!"	"Big L, let it go!"	"Bow to your partner!"