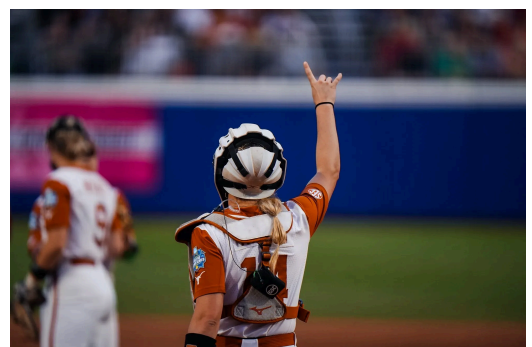


Catchers Skills - Intro, Setup, and Stances

What does it mean to be a catcher?

As a good catcher, you will:

- Support and encourage your pitcher
 - How:
 - Giving signs and calling pitches
 - Body Language / Good Confident Target
 - Verbal Encouragement
 - Attributes:
 - Positivity
 - Determined
 - Doing our best EVERY pitch
- Prevent steals and keep baserunners honest
 - How:
 - Keep balls in front of us
 - Watching the runners & communicating with our defense
 - “Throwing down”
 - Attributes:
 - Toughness
 - Athleticism and mobility
 - Strong & accurate arms
- “Field General”
 - How:
 - The game is in front of us
 - High “IQ” - knowing the situation
 - Communicating with our defense
 - Attributes:
 - Smart
 - Attentive
 - Leader
 - Be a great teammate
 - Lead by example - always
 - Be vocal during games



Be comfortable to be confident



We need to be physically comfortable to allow our mind to focus on the game.

*To be able to focus on the game, and support our pitcher well – we can't be thinking about our balance or comfort. Building comfort in our stances and setup positions is foundational to everything else. **This includes our being comfortable in our gear!***

How should our gear fit?

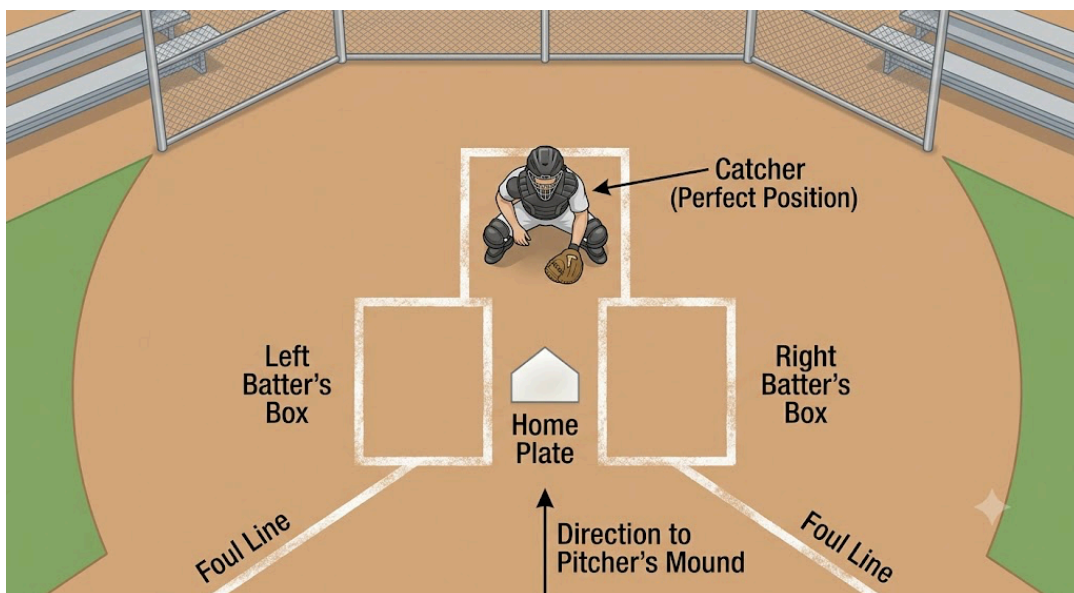
- Chest protector:
 - Tight to our body - “like armor”
 - Should not shift or bounce when we move
- Shin guards:
 - Tight to our legs
 - Doesn't rotate or shift when we're moving between stances
- Helmet:
 - The chinrest should be tight on our chin
 - The backplate should be snug against the back of our head
 - Should not move around when we shake our head “no”
 - ***This is super important - our helmet being snug protects our head and our brains from any bumps or impacts!***
- How to test?
 - Put on your full gear and go for a run
 - Does our chest protector bounce up and down and hit our chin/neck?
 - Do our shin guards stay in place, on the front of our shins?
 - Does our helmet bounce around and bump on our chin or head?
 - Can I move my head quickly up, down, left, and right without my head moving inside the helmet? Is my vision clear no matter where I look or how quickly?
- Your gear will likely need weekly adjustments! Put your gear on at home every week and test for fit – tighten up and adjust as needed! It should feel like your “second skin”

At-Home Drill

- How quickly can we get our gear on *correctly*?
- Practice getting your gear on at home and time yourself - not frantic, but efficient!
 - Target: 40 seconds or less

Where to Setup

- Setup:
 - Centered body and glove behind the plate
 - Square to the pitcher
 - Should not be able to reach the hitter's back leg
 - This may mean we need to move closer or further away from the plate depending on where the batter is setup in the box



Stances

The situation will dictate which stance you take up for that pitch. Get comfortable in multiple stances and use them as tools for different scenarios.

- Sign stance
 - for preparing for a pitch or getting ready to setup to receive
- Primary stance - for when we don't have baserunners
 - Both feet
 - Right knee down
- Secondary stance - for when we have baserunners or might need to make a throw
 - Both feet
 - Right knee down

Sign Stance



- Sign stance focus points:
 - Toes “hang loose” apart 👍
 - Knees fairly close together
 - we’re protecting the sign
 - Only the pitcher should be able to see
 - On the balls of our feet
 - Glove low and outside of our left foot
 - helping us hide the sign from runners on second and third base
 - Throwing hand between our legs and close to our body - to deliver the sign

Primary Stance - two feet



Focus points:

Feet wider than home plate - and heels on the ground

Let's make an "M" with our legs
Hips down and back

Chest forward toward the pitcher

Shoulders over our knees

Weight slightly forward - toward the balls of our feet

Throwing hand protected behind our hip/cleat

Glove low - "knee level"

Primary stance - right knee down



Focus points:

Right knee down and wide

Right foot on the ball of our foot and under our bottom

Left foot steps out in front of us on a 45 degree angle

Hips pressed straight down -
Create a diagonal line through our legs

Chest forward toward the pitcher

Shoulder out over our left knee

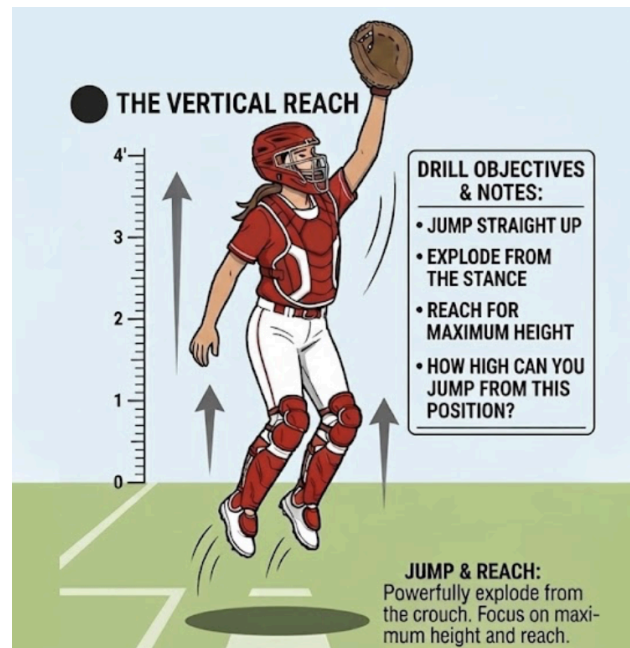
Throwing hand protected behind our hip/cleat

Glove low - "knee level"

At-Home Drills

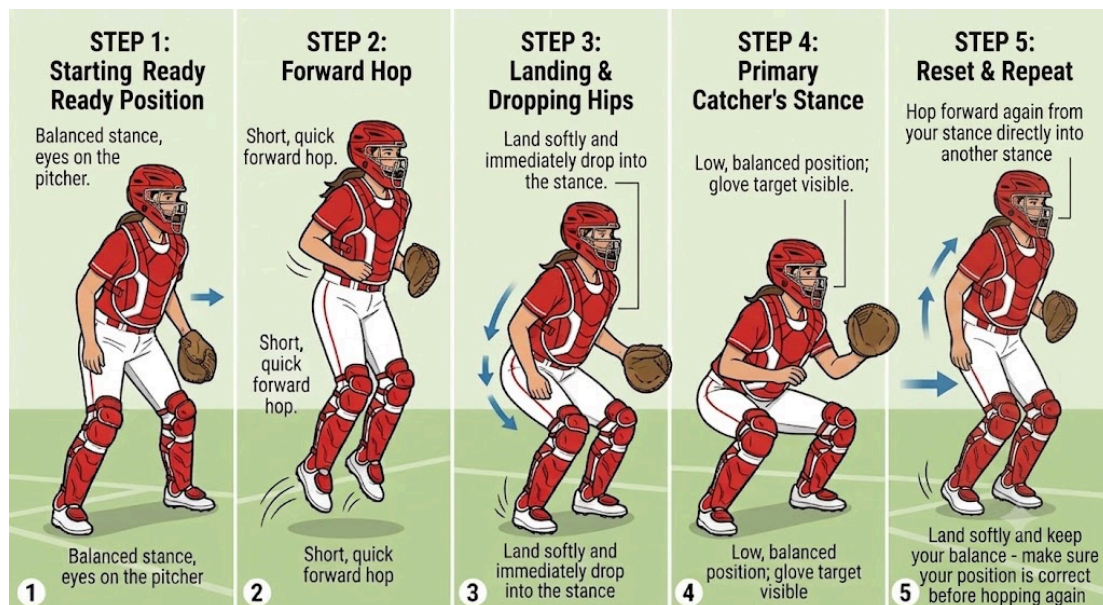
- **Jump and reach from my two-feet primary**

- Get into your primary, two-feet stance
- Jump straight up, as high as you can
- How powerful do I feel? Can I jump high?
- Make adjustments to your foot position until you feel the most powerful and athletic - what results in the best jump?



- **Hop & squat “leapfrog”**

- Start in your primary, two-feet stance
- Hop forward and get back into your stance without needing to reset your feet
- How far can you go without losing balance or falling over?



- **Alternating between sign stance and both primary stances**
 - Start standing, get into your sign stance
 - Move from sign stance, to primary stance - two feet
 - Back to sign stance
 - Move into your right-knee down stance
 - Back to sign stance
 - Get comfortable moving between these positions over and over
 - Practice at home just in your shinguards.
- **How long can you comfortably hold your setup?**
 - Practice getting into all 3 stances and sitting in them for as long as is comfortable
 - Sign
 - Primary - both feet
 - Primary - right knee down

Blocking



What is blocking?

Blocking is a move catchers make when the pitch isn't going to make it to them in the air.

When the ball is going to bounce in front of the catcher's reach, it's up to the catcher to prevent the ball from getting behind them - and allowing base runners to advance.

The objective of blocking is to "be a sponge" and allow the ball to bounce off the catcher's chest, and stay in front of the catcher.

The blocking position checklist:

- Knees down and wide
- Hips down and back
- Glove touching the ground between our legs, and as close to our body as possible
- Throwing hand protected BEHIND our glove
- Arms in a "home plate shape" with elbows bent and against our sides
- Chest leaning over the ground/ball in a rounded "C" shape
- Chin tucked down, eyes following the ball



The Starfish Drill



1. Starting with our knees down and wide - as if we're setting up to block
2. Reach our hands high in the sky, chin up, hips forward and high in extension
3. Now reverse, and get into the proper blocking position:
 - a. Hips down and back
 - b. arms down between legs
 - c. back rounded
 - d. chin down
4. Repeat slowly 10x speeding up a little bit each time

Blocking Progression

Step 1: Tracking the ball with our eyes & chin



1. Get in our blocking position
2. Watch the ball come in and track it with our eyes, and move our chin into the tucked position

Step 2: Hands and head



1. Start with our legs in our blocking position
2. Present our glove, with a low target
3. Continue to track the ball with our eyes and chin, but also get our arms working together to get the glove between our legs, as tight to our body as possible, and our throwing hand PROTECTED

Step 3: Entire movement

Two-feet down



One-knee down



1. Start in our primary stance
2. For two feet down – Kick our feet BACK
 - a. Picture our knees “replacing our feet” on the ground
3. For one-knee down – our feet don’t move
4. Get into that solid blocking position - follow the checklist!
 - a. Hips down and back
 - b. Chin down
 - c. Body rounded forward in a “C” shape - chest over the ball
 - d. Glove touching the ground
 - e. Arms tight to our body and throwing hand protected

Mobility & Strength Exercises

IMPORTANT: When we're working on our mobility - it's important to go through the movements slowly and with intention! Pay close attention to how your body is feeling and once you start to feel a "stretch" or discomfort - that's a good place to pause. Remember to keep breathing! If you start to cramp - take a break, relax your muscles, and try again.

The "Dailies"

Takes almost no time at all and can be done anywhere! Do these every day to improve your mobility!

Hip Openers x 10



1. Start in our primary stance - with both feet flat on the ground and our bottom down and back
2. Place our elbows inside of our knees
3. Spread our knees with the help of our elbows until we feel a stretch

Calf Stretch x 10



1. Start in our primary stance - with both feet flat on the ground and our bottom down and back
2. Place our elbows on top of our knees

3. Rotate our body and press our knees forward - we should feel the stretch in our calves and achilles muscles.
4. Return to the starting position and do the other side. Alternate for 10 stretches on each side.

Frogs x 10



1. Start with our feet flat on the ground and knees wide. Use our hands to grab the tops of our feet
2. Stand up while still holding your shoes - doing your best to straighten your legs
 - a. You will feel the stretch in your hamstrings, glutes, and lower back
 - b. Be slow and gentle with your body on this exercise!
3. Think about keeping our back straight and not letting it round over into a C shape.

Hip Specific Work

90-90 Swivels



1. Start on your bottom with knees up
2. swivel your knees to one side and get your legs into the “90-90” position, with our knees at right angles
3. Swivel back up and over to the other side - again focused on 90 degree angles with our legs

Tip: our angles might close down as we’re doing this - take the time to fix them as you go. 10 reps on each side is a good place to start!

Bonus: try to do this with your hands raised in the air like in picture #4

90-90 Swivel-to-Bridges



1. Same exercise as our 90-90 Swivels, but now once you swivel to one side in the 90-90 position, we extend through our hips and bridge them up.
2. Then repeat on the other side as we swivel through, and bridge up

Tip: This is a great exercise to do AFTER we’ve done our swivels. 10 reps on each side.