

BALL ROTATION & PITCH SELECTION

Pitchers throw different pitches, called "stuff" in ball language, by imparting spin on the ball. This is usually done by applying a suitable grip and then releasing the ball with the right wrist and hand action. Understanding the dynamics of pitch movement is important because catchers are in the best position to read the rotation on the pitch. They can help their pitcher correct any problem before the game is lost!

Ball rotation is critical because the ball will always break in the direction of its spin.

THE BALL ALWAYS BREAKS IN THE DIRECTION IT IS ROTATING

Other factors are involved, but play a less important role in pitch movement. These are: a) PITCH LOCATION, and b) WIND DIRECTION. Pitch location is important in creating the visual effect of the pitch and the wind creates the air movement across the surface of the ball that makes it move. The bottom line is, always

STUDY PITCH ROTATION

PITCH LOCATION

Pitches work best when thrown at their most effective location. For example, the drop is most effective when thrown low, no more than 4" above the knees for a strike and below the knees for a ball.

***WHERE YOU PITCH
IS ALWAYS MORE IMPORTANT
THAN WHAT YOU PITCH***

It is also important to understand that every pitch does not have to be a strike. In fact, the definition of control is:

CONTROL

**"THE ABILITY TO THROW A STRIKE WHEN YOU NEED ONE
AND A BALL WHEN YOU WANT ONE, ANYWHERE IN AND
AROUND THE STRIKE ZONE".**

By this definition, it is desirable to throw pitches outside the strike zone as required. The question is, "When would this be desirable?" When should a pitcher intentionally throw a ball? That becomes a matter of strategy and tactics, the subject of another segment of this manual.

The following charts summarize some tried and proven ways of using various pitches and provide ideas to help select game pitches more effectively.

PITCH SELECTION

The next thing catchers need to learn, is how to use pitches to best advantage and what pitches to select for best effect against each batter. This refers to Catching Principle #4, introduced in Part 1.

***WORK WITH THE PITCHER TO SELECT THE
MOST EFFECTIVE PITCHES FOR EACH BATTER.***

Softball is a TEAM GAME. The pitcher and catcher are a team within the team. Complete effectiveness in retiring batters can only be achieved if the pitcher and catcher work together.

Although it's the catcher's job to decide each pitch, every pitch must be thrown with absolute confidence, so pitchers must have a veto option for occasions when they do not feel right about throwing the called pitch.

This means discussing the hitters frequently, planning strategy together and experimenting with different tactics on batters.

One way to achieve this communication is to make a point of sitting with the pitcher at the end of each inning to discuss all the pitches thrown to each batter and consider changes for the next time that batter comes to the plate.

This chart shows the proper ball rotation and pitch location for all pitches. Use it as a ready reference until you have the information memorized.

PITCH	BALL ROTATION	PITCH LOCATION
DROP BALL	DOWNWARD - TOWARD CATCHER	A) STRIKE - 4" ABOVE KNEES B) BALL - BELOW KNEES
RISE BALL	UPWARD AS SEEN BY CATCHER	A) STRIKE - BETWEEN BELT AND LETTERS B) BALL - BETWEEN LETTERS AND EYES
SLOW BALL	NOT IMPORTANT	MOSTLY LOW OUTSIDE
CURVE BALL	SIDEWARD - TOWARD DIRECTION OF BREAK	HIGH OR LOW USE CORNERS ONLY