

FRAMING THE PITCH

COACHES:

Teaching your catchers to "Frame" the pitch can be helpful to your pitchers especially on close pitches. This means catching each pitch towards the center of the plate to try and make the pitch look more like a strike.

This applies mostly to borderline pitches, those close enough to be either strikes or balls. By "framing" those pitches, the catcher may be able to influence the call in favour of the pitcher.

Here's how it works.

Pitches at the top of the strike zone are caught with the palm of the mitt facing downwards. At the bottom of the zone, the mitt is held palm up. The mitt always receives the ball with the pocket towards the center of the plate. Here we see the technique illustrated for a low pitch on the catcher's left side. The idea is to smoothly and subtly move the catching hand towards the center of the plate, to help the umpire see the pitch as a strike. But be warned. Sometimes umpires get annoyed if the movement is jerky or an obvious attempt to influence their judgement. So catchers have to practice to make the move subtle, smooth and undetectable.

The most difficult pitch for a right handed catcher to frame, is the low pitch on the right side of the plate. For these, the ball has to be caught backhanded, with the mitt in a reverse position.



This is not a difficult skill to learn. It requires only an awareness of the technique and some repetitions to make it a habit. But it's worth the effort because the extra strikes called, can sometimes be the difference between winning and losing.