

POSITIONING

The first idea for a beginning catcher to grasp, is where and how far to stand behind the batter. The natural tendency is to stand well back, to avoid being hit by the bat. But there are a number of good reasons to stand as close as possible to the batter without, of course, getting hit. This is the FIRST PRINCIPLE OF CATCHING:

"CATCH THE BALL AS CLOSE TO THE FRONT OF THE PLATE AS POSSIBLE"

The advantages are:

1. Better chance of a foul tip going directly into the glove.
2. The target is closer to the pitcher, making a shorter pitching distance.
3. The umpire is closer to the plate, increasing reliability of the call.
4. The catcher is closer to second base, for a shorter throw on a steal play.
5. Easier to reach and field bunted balls.

To determine the most efficient catcher position, follow these three simple steps.

1. Wait until the batter is set in the batter's box.
2. Establish an imaginary line about one bat length behind the back foot of the batter.
3. The catcher's feet should be on that line. (one bat length behind the batter).

CAUTION

IF THE BAT TOUCHES THE GLOVE OR ANY PART OF THE CATCHER DURING THE SWING, THE BATTER IS AWARDED FIRST BASE FOR, "CATCHER OBSTRUCTION".

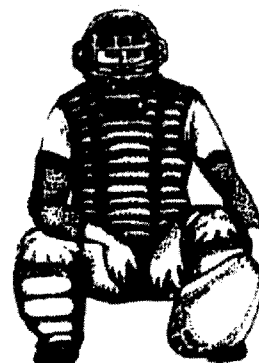
BASIC POSITIONS

Learning to catch starts with good mechanics. These include signal position, setting the target with and without runners on base and receiving the ball.

SIGNAL POSITION

To give the signal,

1. Squat with the heels off the ground.
2. Knees slightly apart, aligned with edges of plate.
3. Glove hand is placed to the side, glove below knee.



GIVING THE SIGNAL

SETTING THE TARGET

Once the signal is given, the catcher sets up in one of the two Target Positions illustrated, to set the target for the pitch. The position chosen, depends on whether or not there are runners on base. The important thing to keep in mind is the requirement to help the pitcher as much as possible.

BASES EMPTY - SQUAT

Use the *SQUAT POSITION*, when there are no runner on base.

SQUAT POSITION

1. Rest position for the catcher.
2. Stay low, bend forward, extend mitt
3. Clench fingers of throwing hand with thumb outside.
4. Hide hand behind thigh, ankle or mitt.
5. Catch the ball with one hand (except on third strike)



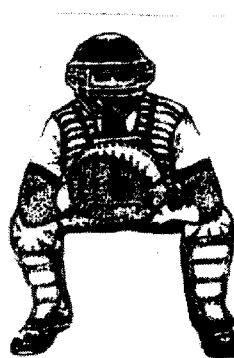
NOBODY ON BASE

RUNNERS ON BASE - CROUCH

Use this position when there are runners on base.

1. Every pitch with runners on base.
2. Feet spread, heels on the ground.
3. Stride foot slightly ahead.
4. Weight evenly distributed.
5. Throwing hand behind mitt.
6. Ready to throw on every pitch.
(Principle #2)

This catching position provides greater lateral mobility and easier shifting of the feet to throw.



RUNNERS ON BASE



HEELS ON GROUND