

Playing Catch - Catching The Baseball

Be Prepared

When a thrown ball gets by you it's easy to look over to the other guy and place the blame on a bad throw. The problem isn't entirely in the throw. It also lies in your expectation that the ball will be thrown right at you. When playing catch during practice or receiving a throw during a game, expect that the ball won't be thrown to you. If you start with that expectation then you will see the throw that isn't right to you as an opportunity to make a good play.

Position

When playing catch at the beginning of practice, use the time as an opportunity to practice not only throwing the baseball, but catching it as well. When waiting to receive the throw, start by putting yourself in an athletic position. It doesn't mean you have to be in the same ready position you would be when the ball crosses the plate, but you still want to have your knees slightly bent and your weight on the balls of your feet. Basically, you want to be ready to move.

Go To The Ball

Instead of standing in one spot and sticking your glove out hoping (or not caring) if you catch it. Move into a position to give you the best opportunity to catch the ball. If it's thrown over your head take a drop step and go after it. If it's thrown a few feet to your side, move and try and get in front of it. Playing catch gives you an opportunity to practice fielding and catching the ball.

Hands

Give the player your playing catch with a target to shoot for. Place both hands out in front of your chest prior to the player throwing the ball. This will give him an area to shoot for. If the ball is thrown above your waist you should catch the ball with your thumbs together, closing your bare hand over your glove as you make the catch. If the ball is thrown below your waist, catch the ball with your little fingers together and again close your bare hand over your glove as you make the catch.

Have Fun

If all this sounds dry and boring then all you need to do is turn playing catch into a little competition to make things interesting.

Give targets for your partner and see how many times he can hit the glove without you having to move it. Have him do the same and see who can get to 5 or 10 first.

Alternate throwing groundballs to each other, the person receiving the throw will play first base. The first person to not field the ball cleanly or to pull the other person off the base with a bad throw loses.

With younger players it can be fun counting how many throws can be made back and forth without the ball hitting the ground.

In the end baseball should be fun and there's no reason you can't have fun and work on becoming a better player at the same time. Playing catch is certainly one opportunity to accomplish both.

Player Tip

You can set the tone for how your team approaches playing catch. If you make it a pre-practice activity for loosening up, then that will probably be the level of effort that you will get from your players.

Stretch as a team and play catch as a team. Have team throwing competitions and place emphasis on your team's ability to play catch. You will see the reward during your games