



The Super Seven Throwing Movements you need to master before Pitching!

Learning to pitch starts with understanding and being able to repeat a series of throwing skills. Pitching lessons are great but start with teaching the gift that lasts a lifetime; proper throwing skills. Let's identify the seven movements you need to feel to throw and pitch for a long time.

1. Fast Thumbs

Clean arm action starts with the ball being taken out of the glove with the throwing thumb initiating the take away. In fact, make sure both thumbs quickly turn down as your hands and glove separate to throw. Fast thumbs equal fast elbows and fast elbows will generate the arm speed needed to throw hard! Spend time teaching fast thumbs as this initial movement is crucial to developing arm action and pitching skills later on. Players that pull the ball out of the glove with their entire hands will not survive the cut as they go to the big field at 13!

2. Break at the Zipper

All throwers have an imaginary zipper that is located from the middle of their chest to their belly button. Know where your throwing zipper is at all times! The glove should be positioned on line with the zipper to keep both elbows down in the beginning of the throw. The glove at the zipper will also make it easier to take the ball out of the gloves with your newly found fast thumbs. No matter what position you play on the field, breaking at the zipper will be the start of sound throwing skills.

3. Close the Door, Open the Door

Think of the shoulders of the thrower as a door. Players need to close (front shoulder lined up directly with their target) the door quickly before starting to throw. **"Get wide and get to the side"** is an effective teaching cue to remind players to side saddle their throw and to get their legs underneath them. Once the front door is closed, the back shoulder must finish the throw and open the door. Proper shoulder rotation is crucial to preserving young arms and will go a long way in improving accuracy once you head to the pitching mound.

4. Swim and Swivel

Ask your player what they did the last time they were swimming in a pool. Hopefully, they show you a long smooth freestyle type swim stroke that should resemble proper throwing skills. Above average throwers at every level will have the glove reach out (not pointed or straightened out) toward their intended target then pull back or swivel the glove back into the body to help the back shoulder (remember open the door?) finish the throw. “Swim and swivel” is also a movement all position players must master to throw hard. The swivel action of the glove will also help elevate the throwing elbow as you begin to release the ball.

5. **J-up**

Forget the “throw overhand” “get on top” suggestion that forces many young throwers to catapult the ball past their ear to throw and causes shoulder discomfort. Let your players see and feel the power of the J, where the throwing elbow is slightly above the shoulder and the throwing hand is outside the elbow. Looking from the front, the throwers arm/shoulder/hand position should look like an inverted capital J. Remember, elbow above the shoulder and throwing hand outside the elbow will allow for a longer **whip** (arm slot) to throw the ball. Some of the hardest throwers at every level throw from this J or $\frac{3}{4}$ arm slot ($\frac{4}{4}$ arm slot being straight overhand near the ear and a $\frac{1}{4}$ arm slot being close the sidearm). Be careful the next time you tell your players to get on top and throw overhand as they mistakenly interpret your message to throw the ball like your area batting cage iron mike machine.

6. **Flip the Laces**

Watch the back foot of good players throwing. Effective throwing is a rotational movement that requires the hips to turn the shoulder which allows the shoulder to release the elbow and hand to throw the ball. Remember you can’t close and open the shoulder doors without proper hip turn. As you get older, Major league teams and orthopedic doctors will tell you that hip rotation velocity (how fast you turn you hips at a certain point in your delivery) is directly related to fastball velocity. Bottom line, if you want to throw hard, check to see if you are taking the back foot and turning the foot over and quickly flipping the back shoe laces over and into the ground. The flip the laces teaching cue will remind your throwers to have their legs underneath them when they throw and reinforce the turning action of the legs needed to throw hard and to stay away from the

Sports doctors! Flip the laces on the back foot should hopefully replace the “puppy near the fire hydrant move (the back leg lifts off the ground as your begin to throw!) Many young throwers demonstrate. Similar to hitting, the legs and mid-section of a good thrower should turn to release the baseball. Check the cleats or sneakers of your players to see who is flipping the laces (drag marks and dirty shoelaces) and who is imitating the little puppy near the fire hydrant (no skid marks on their shoes and clean, shiny shoelaces).

7. Reach and Shake

Watch the throwing arm after the ball is released. Players with sound throwing skills will finish their throw with their hand reaching out and across their body, finishing near their opposite knee. If you have closed and open doors and have truly flipped your laces, the finish should be easy! Stopping or pinning your throwing arm against your chest will cause injury and reduces velocity. The sports docs are quick to point out that most arm injuries occur during the deceleration (after the ball is released) phase of the throw.

Learn to shake out the arm after the throw, reach through to your target and the like the trunk of an elephant, shake the arm out and across your body after release.